

Conflict As Contradiction:

A critical geopolitics of *international* conflict

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Peter J. Mayell, B.A. Honours (Cant)

Department of Geography
University of Canterbury
Christchurch, New Zealand
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Abstract

The conflict research subdiscipline within international relations commonly distinguishes international conflict between nation-states from civil war within nation-states. By regarding conflict research as a state-centric geopolitical discourse the thesis challenges this categorisation because (1) of the many links and therefore blurry practical distinction between the two, and (2) stateless nations can be involved in conflict with other nations, thus constituting an 'international' conflict. To overcome this problem an alternative, nation-centric critical geopolitics of international conflict is proposed. In this way the thesis aims to extend both conflict research and critical geopolitics.

To do this the critique utilises recent literature on the contemporary conceptualisation of nation and nationalism to argue against the conventional conflation of nation and state and to reconstruct the adjective "international". Recognising that nations can exist without also being states enables the conceptualisation of *international*, and when such nations come into conflict, either with other stateless nations or nations that are states, this becomes 'international conflict'. This typology allows for conventional 'international' conflict, or rather inter-state conflict, by distinguishing between ethnic and official nations.

The theoretical argument is reinforced by consideration of an empirical case study, that of the Kurds of the Middle East. The Kurds are presented as a distinct and unique stateless nation, the largest in the world, in conflict with the Persian (Iran), Arab (Iraq), and Turkish (Turkey) nations that surround them. The case study is undertaken through analysis of the Kurds and their national homeland of Kurdistan at the local, Middle Eastern, and global scales, each demonstrating in different ways the divergence of nation and state and, in the case of the latter two discussions, an example of an *international* conflict.

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To the other geography masters' students, I extend my utmost annoyance with you all for never ceasing to distract me with needless interruptions, silly sports games on Mondays and Fridays, continual barbs that the place I was studying did not exist (I hope this thesis proves to you that this place *does* exist, and that you can now admit it), never ending hassles about the next Noble Troops.....But seriously, my sincerest thanks go to Karl (especially, for the rides to and from Uni, which saved me from biking, and for the lessons on Vector), George, Jamie, Nic, Andrew, Janan, and of course to Susan, the sanest one of them all, and who I was fortunate enough to share my office with. The year would certainly not have been the same, nor as enjoyable, without you all.

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List of Abbreviations

CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
DDKO	Organisation of Revolutionary Kurdish Youth
DDKD	Revolutionary Democratic Cultural Association
IKF	Independent Kurdistan Front
KDP	Kurdish Democratic Party of Iraq
KDPI	Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran
KDPT	Kurdish Democratic Party of Turkey
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
PKK	Kurdistan Workers Party
PUK	Patriotic Union of Kurdistan
RAF	Royal Air Force
SC	United Nations Security Council
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
US	United States

Preface

International conflict has, for as long as I can remember, been of special interest to me. I cannot pinpoint one reason, nor one event, in my formative years as the defining moment for this interest. But I suspect that my curiosity stems from that of my father, Alan. As a teenager during the Second World War of 1939 - 1945 he collected a weekly news publication called *The War Illustrated*, which was shipped from Britain to New Zealand.

I well recall many childhood hours spent reading these volumes. Thus I learnt about *Blitzkrieg*, Dunkirk, the Phoney War, the Battle of Britain, Operation Barbarossa, Pearl Harbour, the Pacific War, Crete, El Alamein, the Italian Campaign, Operation Overlord and D-Day, the Battle of the Bulge, and Victory in Europe and Victory over Japan Days; not to mention the grand political figures of history, Sir Winston Churchill, Adolf Hitler, Franklin Roosevelt, Benito Mussolini, Joseph Stalin; the great commanders, Bernard Montgomery, Erwin Rommel, Douglas MacArthur; and finally the fighting machines, the Spitfire and Lancaster, the Panzer, Stuka, and Messerschmit, the Sherman, Mustang, and B-29. And all at a very young age.

Before him, my grandfather, Benjamin Bayliss Mayell, was a private in the 15th North Auckland Regiment that fought in France in the First World War of 1914 - 1918. He was wounded at Bapaume, on the Somme, on 24 August 1918 at the age of 30. His brother, my great uncle, Charles Joseph Mayell, was also in France, a private with the New Zealand Rifle Brigade. He was killed in action at Flers, during the bloody Battle of the Somme, on 15 September 1916 at the age of 24 (the age I will turn shortly after the completion of this thesis). His name appears on the list of soldiers with unknown graves at the Caterpillar Valley War Cemetery near Longueval, France.

Later conflicts were also of interest to me. Various media sources informed me about the United Nations' 'police action' in the Korean War of 1950 - 1953, of the escalating United States involvement and ultimate humiliation in Vietnam between 1964 and 1975, of Vietnam's subsequent invasion of Cambodia in 1978, of the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979 and withdrawal in 1988, of the eight year war between Iran and Iraq starting in 1980, of the Falklands/Malvinas Islands War of April -

June 1982, of the US invasions of Grenada in October 1983 and Panama in December 1989, of Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm in the Gulf War of 1990/91, and of the Bosnian and Rwandan conflicts....

Through the course of my final undergraduate and honours year this longstanding personal interest in international conflict has been transformed into a subject of great academic interest, which is codified in the present thesis. The inspiration for this particular topic came during one of my Political Science honours classes last year, in which it was stated that the confrontation between Tito's Partisans and the German army during World War Two, in what became Yugoslavia after the war, was not an 'international conflict' simply because the Partisans did not represent a state. I thought this to be a rather incredulous claim. In this thesis I hope to convince you, the reader, of the validity of my reasons for thinking so, and of the legitimacy of my proposed alternative conceptualisation of 'international conflict'

Author's Note

I would like to take this opportunity to make some preliminary comments regarding this thesis' case study, the Kurds of the Middle East. First, I have been extremely fortunate in undertaking this research in 1996, for early in the year David McDowall's *A modern history of the Kurds* was published. This 470-page *tour de force* proved to be an extraordinarily valuable resource in constructing the three case study chapters. As one reviewer noted in regard to an earlier work, "Few people know as much about the Kurds as David McDowall" Having read most of his latest offering, I have to agree wholeheartedly with this sentiment. On these grounds I defend myself if readers feel (McDowall 1996) appears a little too often in this work. It is purely and simply because this is far and away the most comprehensive and substantial publication on the Kurds. Thank goodness it was published this year and not next!

Second, at the time of writing (October 1996) events in the Middle East over the past two months have given the Kurdish case study a highly topical dimension. In noting this development I do not suggest that the Kurds would otherwise have been a mere 'historical' case study, however, for as long as the Kurdish situation remains unresolved the Kurds will always be 'topical'. These latest eventualities have not - as yet - been serious enough to warrant a late change in the chapter structure of this thesis, but they do provide a pertinent, up-to-the-minute means of concluding the case study material. For this reason contemporary events are described and analysed in the final chapter.

Finally, I feel it necessary to declare my own personal position with regard to the Kurds. Although the Kurds are presented as an empirical case study to make my theoretical argument, and therefore I should maintain 'objectivity', the research process leads - indeed forces, I think - one to develop a considerable level of sympathy for the Kurdish plight and their cause. Unless one is especially thick skinned - which I suppose I am not - countless tales of forced deportations, the destruction of homes and villages, mass deportations, torture, executions, and even attack by chemical weapons that characterises Persian, Arab, and Turkish policies towards the Kurds cannot fail to have a major impact upon the reader. I therefore declare that, while the Kurdish case study is used to prove a point, I do hold a certain amount of compassion for the people that one Kurdish leader appropriately described as "the orphans of the international community".

“War is the continuation of politics by other means”

Carl Von Clausewitz

“What is life? Life is the nation.
The individual must die anyway;
But beyond the life of the individual, there is the nation”

Adolf Hitler

Chapter One

Introduction

Proposing a critical geopolitics of international conflict

“As (new) borders create the possibilities of (new) conflict and cooperation, so too do borders represent both the result and the source of conflict and cooperation. In this way, geography and politics are intimate, but not curious, bedfellows. These two types of situations underscore the longstanding link between domestic conflict and international conflict. If one takes the state as given, one can categorise most conflict into these two categories. If, however, one assumes a somewhat fluid state, this distinction becomes less apparent....Kurdistan offers a clue to analysts”.

Michael Ward in *The new geopolitics* (1992:ix)

Conflict as contradiction

Iraq's invasion of Kuwait on 2 August 1990 precipitated an immediate crisis in international relations. The United Nations Security Council rushed into emergency session, instantly condemning the attack and calling for Iraq's unconditional withdrawal¹, and enforcing strict economic sanctions against Iraq and occupied Kuwait². Almost as quickly the United States, led by President George Bush, set about forming an anti-Iraq coalition to force, militarily if necessary, Baghdad's armies out of Kuwait. For the next five and a half months Iraq's President Saddam Hussein defied the international community, leading the Security Council (SC) to authorise military action to evict Iraq³. This operation, undertaken by the United States (US) led multinational coalition under United Nations (UN) auspices, began on 16 January 1991⁴. The ensuing Gulf War was a short, one-sided affair, Iraq suffering a humiliating military defeat in just six weeks⁵.

In the aftermath of the Gulf War the Kurds, a long repressed ethnic group living in Iraq's mountainous northern region known as Kurdistan, mounted an impromptu rebellion against the Arab⁶ government. For three weeks in March it appeared as though the Kurds might very well succeed in toppling Saddam Hussein's Ba'ath Socialist regime. Baghdad's elite Republican Guard, however, had escaped the rout in Kuwait and unleashed a ferocious vengeance attack on the insolent Kurds. The lightly armed guerillas stood little chance against the Guard's modern weaponry, the shortlived Kurdish rebellion collapsed, and Baghdad inflicted a terrible retribution on the Kurds. But this second Iraqi act of aggression did not bring another round of SC Resolutions nor a renewed military offensive by the coalition. Rather, there came only muffled diplomatic protests from the SC and coalition governments. Unlike the government and people of Kuwait, the Kurds were to be left to fend for themselves.

¹ United Nations Security Council Resolution 660 (2 August 1990).

² United Nations Security Council Resolutions 661 (6 August 1990), 665 (25 August 1990), and 670 (25 September 1990). Today, more than six years later, these Resolutions are still in force against Iraq.

³ United Nations Security Council Resolution 678 (29 November 1990).

⁴ Known as Operation Desert Storm, the offensive operation that followed the initial, defensive build-up of coalition forces in the Persian Gulf, primarily Saudi Arabia, known as Operation Desert Shield.

⁵ United States President Bush ordered a ceasefire on 28 February 1991, which was formalised in SC Resolution 687 (3 April 1991).

⁶ Throughout this thesis I use the term "Arab" to refer only to the Arabs of Iraq, and not to all Arabs, unless, of course, the context suggests otherwise.

The international community's response to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait was therefore in sharp contrast to its reaction to Baghdad's attack on the Kurds. This divergence reveals the centrality of the nation-state in international relations: As a sovereign nation-state Kuwait is protected from such military action by international law. In particular, the UN Charter provides for collective security measures to be taken in defence of an aggrieved nation-state. The Kurds, on the other hand, do not live in their own nation-state of 'Kurdistan' but merely constitute an ethnic group residing in a geographic region within the nation-state of Iraq. As such the Kurds are subject only to Iraq's internal laws and are outside the purview of international law. Thus Iraq's invasion of Kuwait was an illegal act of aggression, a conflict that threatened international peace and security; Baghdad's belligerence against the Kurds, in contrast, was entirely within the governments' rights as sovereign of Iraq and was thus a 'civil war' under Iraq's domestic jurisdiction.

This seemingly straightforward, dichotomous situation was complicated, however, by two factors. First, the Kurd - Arab confrontation was never, in either cause or consequence, a purely domestic event, but closely linked to and influential on international relations. For the Kurds were inspired into rebellion by Iraq's political instability following its Gulf War defeat and active encouragement from the victorious coalition governments. Even more telling were the effects of the Kurdish rebellion and Baghdad's suppression of it beyond Iraq's borders. In early April more than two million panic stricken Kurds began to flee Kurdistan in Iraq, seeking refuge from the Republican Guards' onslaught in neighbouring Iran and Turkey. The refugee crisis instantly involved the Tehran and Ankara governments in providing humanitarian assistance to the desolate Kurds. Live television coverage of the Kurds' desperate plight, as many thousands died of hunger and exposure on the high, snow covered mountain passes to safety, prompted public concern in Europe and America. This sympathy turned to outrage when it became evident that coalition governments, having encouraged the Kurds into rebellion in the first place, now refused to become involved in providing the Kurds with military protection and humanitarian relief. Public pressure eventually won the day, forcing the 'big three' coalition governments - the US, Britain, and France - to launch a joint military - humanitarian operation, subsequently known as Operation Provide Comfort. The UN Security Council even passed Resolution 688, which not only referred to the Kurds by name but framed the refugee crisis as constituting a threat to international peace and

security in the Persian Gulf. In these important ways, therefore, this supposed 'civil war' came to look more like an 'international conflict'. This proposition, however, contradicts the distinction between 'international conflict' - conflict between two or more nation-states - and 'civil war' - conflict within one nation-state - commonly made by the subdiscipline of international relations that studies political violence at this scale, namely conflict research.

A second factor of the Kurd - Arab confrontation further contributes to the blurring of the line between 'international conflict' and 'civil war': The fact that the Kurds are much more than just an ethnic group. Indeed, on the grounds of contemporary research in a wide variety of disciplines the Kurds must be regarded as a distinct, separate, and unique *nation*, with its own ethnicity, language, culture, homeland, and way of life. The Arabs of Iraq, who control the state government, must similarly be adjudged to be a nation. Thus the Kurd - Arab confrontation of March - April 1991 constituted a *conflict between nations*. As the prefix 'inter' means 'between' or 'among', then surely the rebellion and its suppression was an 'international' conflict, therefore exacerbating the haziness between conflict research's 'international conflict' (really *interstate* conflict) and 'civil war' (really *intrastate* conflict). The assertion that the Kurds are a nation, however, contradicts international relations', and indeed conflict research's, conflation of nation and state into nation-state, the assumptions that only nations can be states and only states can be nations, and that all states are nation-states and thereby include only one nation within its boundaries.

Thus the Kurdish rebellion, its Arab suppression, and the refugee crisis presents two contradictions: By blurring the distinction between 'international conflict' and 'civil war' and by undermining the nation-state concept. This thesis is an attempt to reconcile these two contradictions.

As the first step in this endeavour this Introduction establishes the conceptual framework within which this thesis is undertaken. It is obvious from the above discussion that the nation-state concept lies at the very heart of international relations. For this reason the next section examines the nation-state in international relations and, of particular concern to this thesis, in the conflict research subdiscipline. The inherent spatiality of the nation-state, combined with its centrality in international relations and

conflict research, means that these must both be regarded as geopolitical discourses, which provides the link to political geography. The third section therefore outlines the concepts of geopolitics and discourse, and illustrates how conflict research is a nation-state centric geopolitical discourse. But as such conflict research is open to critical investigation by a recent development within geopolitics, a field known as critical geopolitics. This critique centres on a challenge to the validity of the nation-state as the unit of analysis in conflict research and presents this thesis' argument of a critical geopolitics of international conflict. The main body of this research, outlined in this chapter's final section, develops and substantiates this argument by using a literature review of nation and nationalism studies to argue against the conflation of nation and state, and by utilising an expanded case study of the Kurds. While this thesis' main concern is to propose a critical geopolitics of international conflict as a means of reconciling the above contradictions, the methodology section also outlines a number of secondary objectives.

The nation-state in international relations

The term "nation-state" results from the equation and conflation of two distinct concepts, those, obviously, of "nation" and "state". First introduced into the English language in the thirteenth century CE, the noun "nation" is derived from the Latin verb "*nasci*", meaning "to be born", and the consequent noun "*nationem*", connoting "breed" or "race" (Connor 1978:381; Collins English Dictionary and Thesaurus 1993:756; Taylor 1993:194). Because of its direct association with "*nasci*" and "*nationem*", "nation" was closely comparable to the adjective "ethnic". This near synonymity was an entirely logical etymological extension, because "ethnic" is derived, via the French "*ethnie*", from the Greek "*ethnos*", meaning "nation" in the "pristine sense of a group characterised by common descent" (Connor 1978:386). The nation, therefore, was a community defined by ethnic identity, often strengthened by common and unique linguistic and religious identities also.

Over the next four centuries the noun "nation" was increasingly used to refer to the population of a country⁷, regardless of its "ethnic" composition (Williams 1976:178).

⁷

I dislike this term 'country' because of its blatant ambiguity. Does it mean the *countryside* of a state? Or does it mean the state territory as a whole, including (non-logically) urban areas? It is

This practice was clearly related to the rise in Europe of the political doctrine of popular sovereignty, which asserted the rights of nations to, using the modern term, self-determination; to the establishment of their own territorial judicial unit known as the state. The state's boundaries would thus be determined by the spatial limits of that nation, to the inclusion of all members, or nationals, and to the exclusion of all non-members, or non-nationals. The state government would be controlled by the political will of the nation through liberal democracy, hence the notion of 'government by the people for the people'. The ethnically defined nation therefore became the source of both the state's territoriality and political legitimacy: The nation and the state should be spatially congruous and only the nation's government had the right to exercise sovereignty over the nation's population and territory. Hence the equation of the nation and state concepts and their conflation into nation-state, an ideal form in which a single ethnically defined nation has expression as a distinct and unique political community in its own state.

The entrenchment of the nation-state system in Europe from the mid-seventeenth century, when the Treaty of Westphalia (1648) was signed, and its gradual spread via nineteenth century European colonialism around the globe led to the conviction that only nations can be states and only states can be nations (G.E. Smith 1994:404). In turn, this assumption led to another, namely that all states are nation-states. As Taylor (1994:156) notes, "In the twentieth century the nation-state has become ubiquitous. All states, whatever their cultural make-up, are assumed to be nation-states". With the concepts of nation and state thus totally conflated the extended noun "nationalism", by the time it entered common usage in the twentieth century, denoted individual (as citizens) and collective (as the nation) loyalty to the(ir) state (Connor 1978:386).

The term 'international relations' refers to both the empirical relations between nation-states and inter-governmental organisations such as the European Union and the United Nations (the 'real world' of global politics) and the theoretical examination and explanation of those relations undertaken by scholars within the academic discipline. These two interrelated aspects are respectively categorised here as *practical* and *formal* international relations. Key texts in the academic discipline include those by Deutsch

often used as a synonym for state, but it is in my mind wholly inappropriate because of its ambiguity. For this reason I refrain from using this term throughout this thesis. It is used here

(1979), Halle (1962), Keohane and Nye (1989), Morgenthau (1985), Rustow (1967), Stoessinger (1990, 1993), and Yost (1968). The equation of nation and state, their conflation into nation-state, the assumptions that only nations can be states and vice versa, and that all states are nation-states are all common in the international relations literature. Consider the following illustrative examples.

The equating of nation and state is evident in their widespread interutilisation and, given that formal international relations (IR) focuses on the behaviour of and relations between states, especially in the use of “nation” when referring to “state” (or rather “nation-state”). The titles of major IR texts, and the number of editions of some of them, highlights this practice. For instance: *A world of nations* (Rustow 1967); *Politics among nations* (Morgenthau 1985, Sixth Edition); *The might of nations* (Stoessinger 1991, Ninth Edition); *Nations and men* (Duchacek 1971); *How nations behave* (Henkin 1979, Second Edition); *Why nations go to war* (Stoessinger 1993, Sixth Edition); *Tides among nations* (Deutsch 1979); and *Games nations play* (Spanier 1990, Seventh Edition).

The universal conflation of nation and state into nation-state is also dominant in IR texts: For example, Halle (1962:10) asserts that “a prime fact about the world is that it is composed of nation-states”. Similarly, Stoessinger (1991:6) writes that “Our world is made up of over one hundred and sixty political units called nation-states”. These quotes also demonstrate the assumption that all states of the world are nation-states, thereby reinforcing the conviction that only nations can be states and vice versa, thus further contributing to the equating of nation and state. The nation-state, therefore, undoubtedly lies at the very heart of formal international relations, which both reflects and reinforces its centrality in practical international relations. Indeed, as Nietschmann (1993:25) claims, “Almost all academic analysis (formal IR) and state and international policies (practical IR) are based on (the perception of a) world of states”.

The subdiscipline of formal international relations with which this thesis is concerned, namely conflict research, has essentially developed since the end of the Second World War. Conflict research (CR) analyses many facets of international conflicts; including, *inter alia*, their context, actors, sources, issues, management, and

outcome. The intellectual father of conflict research is generally considered to be Johann Galtung (1975; 1989). Presently John Burton (1969, 1986), Louis Kriesberg (1982, 1989), Chris Mitchell (1981, 1996), Dean Pruitt (1985, 1989), Jeffrey Rubin (1981, [with Bercovitch] 1992), Saadia Touval (1982, [with Zartman] 1985), and William Zartman (1982, 1994) are regarded as leading contemporary scholars. Conflict research maintains (and thereby strengthens) the centrality of the nation-state in the broader IR discipline by distinguishing international conflict *between* two or more nation-states from civil war *within* a nation-state.

Evidence of this distinction literally pours out of conflict research's statistical databases, which are used for the scientific evaluation of a vast number of case studies in search of general conditions for the successful (and unsuccessful) conflict management and resolution techniques (eg, negotiation, mediation, arbitration, peace -keeping, -building, and -making). For these databases focus almost exclusively on conflict *between* nation-states, thus de-emphasising (and in some cases completely omitting) conflict *within* nation-states. Several examples illustrate this point. First and foremost is J. David Singer's Correlates of War (COW) database, by far the largest and most comprehensive of all, whose 'targets' - that is the actors in international conflict - are "nation-state members of the international system" (Cioffi-Revilla 1989:20; see also Singer and Small 1973 and Singer and Diehl 1990). The International Crisis Behaviour (ICB) dataset, developed by Michael Brecher, also uses the nation-state as its unit of analysis (Cioffi-Revilla 1989:22), as does Jack Levy's database on great power wars (Cioffi-Revilla 1989:24). Two other databases, those developed by Robert Butterworth (1976) and J. David Singer and Melvin Small (1982), deserve mention for these move, at least partly, beyond the nation-state as the unit of analysis. Butterworth's dataset includes civil wars that have escalated to involve a neighbouring nation-state in the conflict. Singer and Small have gone a step further by establishing a separate database for civil wars. Despite this movement the nation-state undoubtedly remains the central focus of formal international relations and conflict research.

Conflict research as geopolitical discourse

Implicit in the above discussion is the idea of international relations, and therefore also conflict research, as a geopolitical discourse. This section outlines the concepts of

geopolitics and discourse to demonstrate what is meant by 'geopolitical discourse', illustrates how IR/CR is indeed a geopolitical discourse, and identifies how its 'geopolitics' serves to determine its field of study. The explanation of international relations and conflict research as a geopolitical discourse provides the link with political geography and, more specifically, with a new development within this subdiscipline of geography, namely critical geopolitics.

The field of geopolitics has a long tradition, dating back to the turn of the century work by two of political geography's 'founding fathers', Britain's Sir Halford Mackinder (1890; 1904) and Germany's Friedrich Ratzel (1969)⁸. Later, in the 1930's and '40s, German Karl Haushofer's *geopolitik* was a somewhat different but nevertheless associated variant. In the post-Second World War period geopolitics suffered enormously as a result of *geopolitik*'s perceived close association with Nazism (Perry 1995). Although geopolitics recovered somewhat in the 1970s and '80s, it is only now, in the last decade of the twentieth century, that geopolitics is making a strong comeback from this 'guilt by association' (Ward 1992). As shall be discussed shortly it is 'critical geopolitics' that is leading this resurgence.

Despite this long history 'geopolitics' has been, and indeed remains, extraordinarily difficult to define (O'Tuathail 1994b:314). "In conventional academic understanding", however, "geopolitics concerns the geography of international politics, particularly the relationship between the physical environment (location, resources, territory, etc) and the conduct of foreign policy" (O'Tuathail and Agnew 1992:191). Agnew and Corbridge (1995:3) go a step further, and claim that:

"In its most common usage geopolitics refers to a fixed and objective geography constraining and directing the activities of states. For example, fixed geographical features of the world, such as the disposition of states in relation to the distribution of the continents and oceans....are seen as determining or strongly conditioning the strategic possibilities and limits of particular states".

Geography's influence on the foreign policy of nation-states, therefore, is constant through time but, because nation-states occupy different and mutually exclusive

⁸ Obviously 1969 is not the turn of the century, but this reprint of Ratzel's *The laws of the spatial growth of states* does not cite the original publication date. I am unsure of its first exact date, but I am sure it was around the late 1890s/1900s.

space, it varies spatially. Geopolitics, however, holds that this spatial variation has the same effect on a nation-state's foreign policy: Thus the influence of the sea, for example, on a coastal nation-state is the same the world over, as is the influence of being a landlocked nation-state. Indeed, for Mackinder (1890) and Ratzel (1969) geopolitics' central argument was that a nation-state's geographical location was the most important factor in determining not only that nation-state's foreign policy but its very destiny. Similarly, Haushofer asserted that *geopolitik* demonstrated "the dependence of all political events on the enduring conditions of the physical environment" (Bassin 1987:120).

So even though geopolitics is specific to each nation-state, because of its own unique location, resources, territory, etc, it is held to be an objective form of analysis. As O'Tuathail and Agnew explain:

"By its own understandings and terms geopolitics is taken to be a domain of hard truths, material realities, and irrepressible natural facts. Geopoliticians have traded on the supposed objective materialism of geopolitical analysis....(which is held to be) impartial as between one or another political system or philosophy. (Geopolitics) addresses the base of international politics, the permanent geopolitical realities around which the play of events in international politics unfolds. These geopolitical realities are held to be durable, physical determinants of foreign policy. Geography, in such a scheme, is held to be a non - discursive phenomenon: it is separate from the social, political, and ideological dimensions of international politics".

The concept of geography influencing the foreign policy of nation-states means that political elites and their foreign policy professionals are able to define their own nation-state's geopolitical 'place' - and perceive those of other nation-states - within the world system. Thus geopolitics is also the mapping of global political space, the spatialisation of international relations. This cartography is produced and disseminated by political elites and their diplomatic fraternity and are reinforced, *inter alia*, by the mass media, educational institutions, and academic think-tanks. O'Tuathail (1994a:535, 542) refers to these as "sites" of production and dissemination of geopolitical knowledge. The construction and perpetuation of a nation-state's geopolitics establishes a geopolitical discourse.

The term 'discourse', like geopolitics, is difficult to define, so there are myriad variations (Gregory 1994:136 - 37). In their argument about discourses in political geography, however, O'Tuathail and Agnew (1992:192 - 93) assert that:

"discourses are best conceptualised as sets of capabilities....used by people in the construction of meaning about their world and their activities. (Discourses are) NOT simply speech or written statements but the social rules by which verbal speech and written statements are made meaningful. Discourses enable one to write, speak, listen, and act meaningfully. They are a set of capabilities, an ensemble of rules by which (social agents) are able to take what they hear and read and construct it into an organised meaningful whole".

For the purposes of this thesis, therefore, a geopolitical discourse is a set of socially constructed, embedded rules by which practitioners and scholars map global political space and spatialise international relations in order to practice, analyse, describe, and explain international political events, and how such phenomena relate to global geopolitics in general but more specifically to the geopolitics of their own nation-state. A geopolitical discourse is thus employed by professionals and academics as a tool for understanding and representing practical and formal international relations.

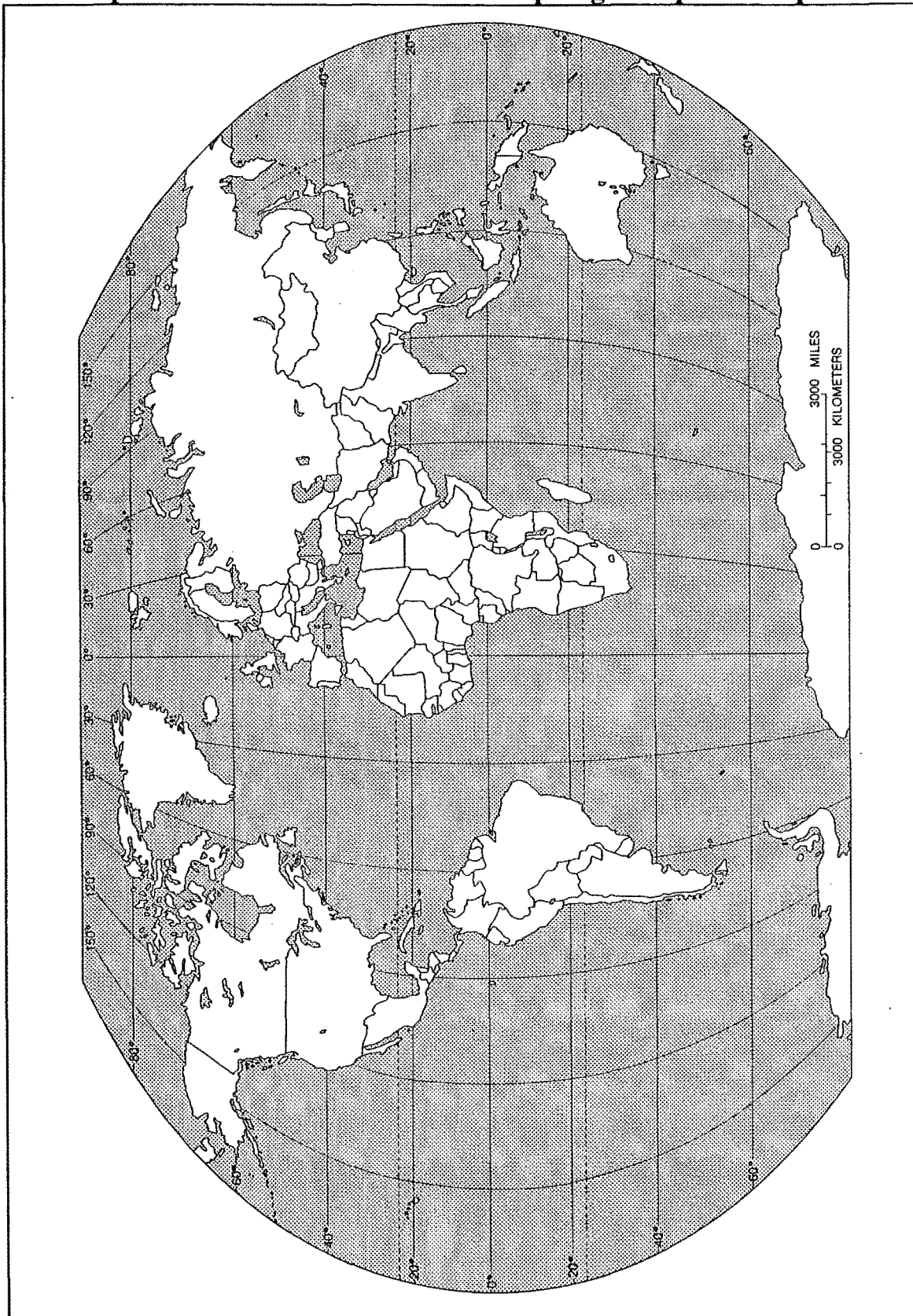
The centrality of the nation-state in international relations and conflict research means that both must be recognised as geopolitical discourses. For as an inherently spatial concept the nation-state provides the boundaries with which international relations, and indeed political geography, maps global political space (Map 1:1). This nation-state centric geopolitics is crucial in formal international relations, for as Agnew and Corbridge (1995:78; emphasis added) explain:

"It has been the *geographical* division of the world into mutually exclusive territorial states that has served to define the field of study. Indeed, the term 'international relations' implies an emphasis on the relations *between* territorial states in contradistinction to processes going on *within* state territorial boundaries".

Thus formal international relations distinguishes its area of concern in accordance with its geopolitical map of the world. So too does the subdiscipline of conflict research, for as we saw above CR defines its specific topic of international conflict as conflict *between* nation-states. Hence conflict research's nation-state centric map of political space exerts a profound influence on which conflicts are included on conflict research

databases and which conflicts are excluded. The entire conflict research epistemology and results, therefore, rests heavily on its nation-state centric geopolitical discourse.

Map 1:1 A nation-state centric map of global political space



Source: BYU 1991.

A critical geopolitics of international conflict

The conceptualisation of international relations as a geopolitical discourse has provided the impetus for the emergence over recent years of a new 'critical geopolitics' field within political geography (eg, Dalby 1990, 1991, 1992, 1993; Dodds and Sidaway 1994; Luke 1994; O'Tuathail 1992, 1994a, 1994b; O'Tuathail 1992; O'Tuathail and Dalby 1994; Sidaway 1994). In contradiction to its geopolitics predecessor, which viewed geography as an objective, fixed, and apolitical influence on geopolitical discourses, critical geopolitics argues that geography is a highly subjective, continually changing, and overtly political modifier of geopolitics. O'Tuathail and Agnew (1992:192), for example, argue that:

"The great irony of geopolitical writing, however, is that it was always a highly ideological and deeply politicised form of analysis. Geopolitical theory....was never an objective and disinterested activity".

Critical geopolitics, therefore, contends that:

"Geography is a social and historical discourse which is always intimately bound up with questions of politics and ideology. Geography is never a natural, non - discursive phenomenon which is separate from ideology and outside politics. Rather, geography as a discourse is a form of power/knowledge itself".

The conceptualisation of geography as a social and historical discourse challenges conventional geopolitics because it enables critical geopolitics to recognise and explore spatial and temporal variations in the geopolitics of nation-states, thus undermining the supposed objectivity and universality of geopolitical analysis. Thus geopolitics is now seen by the critical geopolitics literature as time and place specific; geopolitics is a socially constructed discourse and therefore unique to each nation-state. There may be some, even many, common geopolitical perceptions among different nation-states⁹, but in its entirety a nation-state's geopolitics is all its own. Hence there exists an 'American geopolitics', a 'Sovietology', and yes, even a "Kiwi geopolitics" (Dalby 1993).

Recognising geopolitical discourses as time and place specific enables critical geopolitics to subject them to "rigorous problematisation and investigation" (O'Tuathail 1994a:526, 527), to expose and explore the ways in which geopolitical discourses are constructed and perpetuated by geopolitical sites of production and dissemination. One

⁹

For example, as between the US and its West European allies during the Cold War.

of the most important means by which critical geopolitics undertakes the critique of geopolitical discourses is to use post-structural linguistics. This movement, which originated in France during the 1960s following critiques of linguist Ferdinand de Saussure's structuralism, argues that there is an inherent and considerable tension in the sign between the signifier (a written or spoken word) and that which is signified (the action, concept, or object, etc that a signifier refers to). Thus the relationship between signified and signifier is not necessarily permanent nor stable, that the friction between them will inevitably have temporal and spatial variations (Eagleton 1983; O'Tuathail 1994a). Critical geopolitics applies these lessons to spatial concepts and references common in geopolitical discourses in order to push/pull/stretch them "beyond the limits of their declared meaning" (O'Tuathail 1994a:536). This technique seeks to expose how conservative foreign policy elites, as the most important sites of geopolitical production and dissemination, spatialise international relations (Dodds and Sidaway 1994:518). In this way, therefore, critical geopolitics is "a question not an answer, an approach not a theory" (O'Tuathail 1994a:526). And it is this approach that is used in this chapter to propose a critical geopolitics of conflict research's conceptualisation of 'international conflict'.

This critique centres on a challenge to conflict research', and therefore also international relations', use of the nation-state as its unit of analysis. This approach is not in itself a new one. Giddens (1985:31), for example, condemns IR's division between what goes on within nation-states and what goes on between them as "unfortunate and indefensible", and argues that

"Theorists of international relations, relatively unconcerned with what goes on inside states, tend to underestimate the significance of internal struggles that influence external policies. Everyone acknowledges that to treat a state as an actor is a simplifying notion, designed to help make sense of the complexities of the relations between states. But what is only a theoretical model is all too often given a real significance" (Giddens 1985:288).

O'Tuathail (1994a:537) argues against the use of the nation-state on the grounds of its non-universality. That the nation-state is "a norm (of international relations) built around an idealised reading of the histories of certain European states", and therefore not automatically applicable to other parts of the world.

In this discussion, and indeed in this thesis, I aim to further this critique of the nation-state as the unit of analysis in international relations by arguing for the complete separation of nation and state on the grounds that they are, in fact, two distinct concepts. Moreover, I will also extend this challenge by applying it to one specific branch of IR, obviously conflict research. The remainder of this section, therefore, outlines my reasoning for challenging the nation-state concept and then applies this argument to conflict research.

We have seen above that international relations commonly equates nation and state, conflates the two concepts into nation-state, thus interutilises the three terms, assumes that only nations can be states and vice versa, and that all states are nation-states. It is my argument that all of these practices and convictions are erroneous: That nation and state are not one and the same, that their interutilisation is incorrect, that nations can exist without being states and vice versa, and that only a few states are in fact nation-states. These assertions are based on the following line of argument.

As previously discussed the term “nation” refers, first and foremost, to an ethnic community related by common descent. This relationship means that there are 5 000 nations in the world today, for this is the number of distinct ethnic groups (Carment 1993:137; Nietschmann 1993:25). This number emphatically rejects that equating of nation and state, for there are only around 200 *states* in the contemporary world: A ratio of 25 to one. As not all ethnic groups can be regarded as nations¹⁰, however, the divergence between nation and state is not as drastic as this statistic suggests. Nevertheless, two surveys of the world’s states still reveal the erroneous equation of nation and state. The first of these surveys (Connor 1972:320; emphasis original) found that:

“Of a total of 132 contemporary states, only 12 (9.1 percent) can be described as essentially homogenous from an ethnic point of view. An additional 25 states (18.9 percent) contain an ethnic group accounting for more than 90 percent of the state’s total population, and in still another 25 states the largest element accounts for between 75 and 89 percent of the population. But in 31 states (23.5 percent), the largest ethnic element represents only 50 to 74 percent of the population, and in 39 cases (29.5 percent) the largest group fails to account for even half of the state’s population. Moreover, this portrait of ethnic diversity

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The difference between an ethnic group and a nation is discussed in Chapter Two.

becomes more vivid when the number of distinct ethnic groups within states is considered. In some instances, the number of groups within a state runs into the hundreds, and in 53 states (40.2 percent), the population is divided into more than *five* significant groups”.

Similarly Nielsson (1985:33; emphasis original) surveyed 164 states, his findings revealing that “*the conventional concept of the nation-state fits only one-fourth (45) of the members of the global state system*”¹¹. This overwhelming divergence between the number of nations and states categorically demonstrates the *demand* for the separation of the nation and state concepts, and consequently rejects their conflation into nation-state and the assumptions that only nations can be states and vice versa, and that all states are nation-states.

The recent establishment of civil war databases, a recognition that civil wars can and do have international dimensions which can and do threaten international peace and security. For example, such conflicts are capable of spreading across international boundaries; a second state may provide covert military, financial, and logistical support to one or another party to the conflict; or indeed may openly intervene with its own forces (Small and Singer 1982). While this concession is significant, I believe that it does not go far enough, for two reasons. First the fact that ‘civil wars’ are included on *separate*, and not incorporated into existing ‘international conflict’ databases, demonstrates that this categorisation will be maintained. It may even be intensified, for in this typology ‘civil wars’ are considered to become of real salience if and only if they transgress international boundaries and/or involve the government of a second nation-state. Second, and as a consequence of the first, IR’s/CR’s nation-state centric map of global politics is/will be even further entrenched, thus continuing to deny local political geographies.

¹¹ Nielsson defined a nation-state as a state where 95 percent or more of the population were from the same ethnic group, thus allowing for a minority group of up to 5 percent of the total population. Had he employed a more strict interpretation of ‘nation-state’, as Connor has done, Nielsson would undoubtedly have come up with a somewhat smaller figure.

Thesis methodology and objectives

From the above outline of my argument for a reconceptualised 'international' conflict it is obvious that the meaning of nation and nationalism is crucial. If the nation is not simply the population of a state, and nationalism is not the loyalty of that population to the state, then what, exactly, is the nation and nationalism? This fundamental question is answered in Chapter Two, which uses an extensive literature review of nation(alism) studies to present an understanding of the contemporary conceptualisation of nation and nationalism. This chapter's general argument is that the nation is a distinct political community with a common sense of identity that, via the political doctrine of nationalism, seeks fulfilment through political expression in the nation-state. In this regard the nation and the state are undeniably linked, but they are certainly not one and the same. Moreover, this discussion will distinguish between two main types of nation and nationalism; those nations that are states and those nations that are not states. From this literature review I will re-sign the meaning attached to the central concepts of nation and nationalism to emphasise their distinctiveness from IR's and CR's traditional usage, which also enables the deconstruction of the adjective 'international' into 'international'. From here it is possible, in theoretical terms, to conceive of 'international' conflict *regardless* of whether the nations involved are states or not. Chapter Two concludes by linking the structure of its preceding discussion to the empirical Kurdish case study which follows in Chapters Three, Four, and Five.

These three chapters are organised according to an increasing gradation of geographic scale. Thus Chapter Three starts at the local scale by introducing the Kurds and Kurdistan in a regional geography that explains the main facets of Kurdish national identity. While these dimensions bring Kurds together, one dominant aspect of the regional geography of Kurdistan keeps them apart: The division of the Kurds and Kurdistan into no less than six states, the great majority of their population and the vast proportion of the territory partitioned between Iran, Iraq, and Turkey. For this reason Chapter Three provides three mini regional geographies of the Kurds Kurdistan in these three states, and identifies the ethnic, religious, and linguistic similarities and differences between the Kurds and the Persians, Arabs, and Turks. This final section therefore necessitates an increase in geographic scale to allow the analysis of the Kurds in Iran, Iraq, and Turkey.

Chapter Four analyses the actual *international* conflict in Kurdistan that has continued virtually unabated since the late nineteenth century. This discussion also traces the development of the Kurds from an ethnic group into a nation through three stages. Of tribal, party, and finally popular nationalism. The purpose of this dialogue is to provide a strong example of an *international* conflict which conflict research would inappropriately categorise as a, or rather three, civil wars; but as Chapter Four will illustrate the conflict in Kurdistan is much more than just a 'civil war'.

Chapter Five increases the scale once more to the global, and analyses the Kurds' role in global geopolitics throughout the twentieth century. This discussion demonstrates that the state is not a container and that the three 'civil wars' are not only related to each other but also to global scale geopolitical events. Moreover, Chapter Five will also illustrate that the Kurds have consistently been exploited by foreign powers for the latter's own much broader geopolitical purposes. In doing this, however, foreign governments have offered a consistent, if implicit, recognition of the differences between nation and state.

Apart from developing the above argument for a reconceptualised international conflict, far and away this study's most important objective, this thesis has a number of secondary goals. First and foremost amongst these is to extend, albeit in a small way, the growing critical geopolitics literature. I seek to do this by exploring and contesting a specific area of formal international relations which, as far as I am aware, has not yet been subjected to critical geopolitical analysis. I hope, therefore, to make my own small contribution to the revival of geopolitics, and hence also to political geography as a whole.

Because of the interdisciplinary nature of critical geopolitics, this thesis has a number of objectives that relate to aspects of disciplines perhaps hitherto untouched by political geographers but recently of increasing interest. For example, I hope to extend post-structural linguistics by arguing that the adjective 'international' does not *have* to signify 'inter - nation-state' or even 'inter-state', but that it can be read as 'international'. Although other authors (eg, Connor 1978; Taylor 1995) have recognised that 'international' conventionally denotes 'inter - nation-state' or 'inter-state', I believe my signing is original and, in the context of this thesis, wholly appropriate. This thesis also

aims to extend post-colonial studies by going outside the traditional, over-worked (boring!) European and North American case studies of nation and nationalism (eg, Canovan 1996; Keating 1995; Penrose 1991) and using the Kurds of the Middle East as the empirical weight behind my theoretical argument. Again, the examination of the Kurdish nation and of Kurdish nationalism is not in itself unprecedented (eg, Entessar 1992; Kreyenbroek and Sperl 1992; Chaliand 1993; McDowall 1996), but this particular case study does use previous material in an original manner for my own unique purposes. And in this sense this thesis makes an infinitesimal contribution, given the enormity of this literature, to what I have here called nation(alism) studies.

Finally, this thesis also has the secondary objective of bringing a political geography perspective to the conceptualisation of international conflict in what I hope is a credible critique of conflict research. I wish to reiterate that this is a *constructive* critique; this thesis does not deny that 'international conflict' does indeed occur between states, but *extends* this conceptualisation to include conflict between all nations, *regardless* of whether they are states or not. In this respect I hope to offer something to conflict research, and perhaps even to international relations in general. I thus intend this thesis to provide a bridge linking what in my experience, given their undoubted and considerable interrelationships, are two unnecessarily disparate disciplines.

Chapter Two

Nation, nationalism, and *international* conflict

“The geopolitical location of communities (and relations with) their neighbours often help to activate a sense of ethnicity among members. Relations of alliance and conflict help to sharpen a feeling of self-differentiation between communities involved in these political relations over a long period....It is not society or ethnicity that determines war, but conflict itself which determines the sense and shape of ethnicity. War may not create the original cultural differences, but it sharpens and politicises them, turning what previously were ‘ethnic categories’ into genuine integrated (nations), aware of their identities and destinies”.

Anthony D. Smith in *The ethnic origins of nations* (1986:39).

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to use the nation and nationalism literature as a means of reconceptualising international conflict. This objective will be achieved by exploring the contemporary conceptualisations of nation(alism) in the recent research literature outlined in Chapter One. I shall begin with a general discussion of the difficulties in evaluating this subject, of which the subjectivity of nation(alism) is the most problematic. After this, three common themes found in this research (territory and resources, ethnicity and culture, and historical geography) are highlighted in order to develop an initial three dimensional typology of the modern nation.

These three themes, however, do not categorically distinguish the nation from an ethnic community, a vital distinction to make. To overcome this problem a fourth theme is added to the above typology, that of political community. This fourth dimension not only separates a nation from an ethnic community, but also provides the link with the political doctrine of nationalism. This dogma demands the fulfilment of the principle of self-determination, which nationalism claims is a nation's 'natural right'. In a world in which all territory (except perhaps Antarctica) is claimed by one state or another - and sometimes by more than one - contemporary nationalism clearly amounts to calls for secession from existing states, and as such are strongly resisted by state governments. This schema alludes to the distinction between two types of nation(alism)s, namely those that have states, or official nation(alism)s, and those without states, or ethnic nation(alism)s.

Reconceptualising international conflict as conflict between nations, regardless of whether they have their own state or not, enables a nation centric, as opposed to conflict research's state centric, conceptualisation of international conflict. This alternative thesis perceives the nation in accordance with its contemporary conceptualisation outlined in the nation(alism) studies literature review, and not just as the population of a state. It perceives nationalism as a political doctrine which demonstrates loyalty to the nation, and not allegiance to the state; and it perceives 'international' as an adjective signifying relations between nations, interactions not dependent on statehood. Thus by relaxing, even removing, the state centric assumptions of international relations/conflict research I propose a reconceptualised *international* conflict in order to develop a critical geopolitics of international conflict.

This chapter also provides the analytical framework for evaluating the Kurdish case study which follows. The three dimensional typology of the modern nation, for example, corresponds to the regional geography of Kurdistan presented in Chapter Three. The fourth dimension of political community and the political doctrine of nationalism match the discussion of the international conflict between the Persian, Arab, and Turkish official nations and the Kurdish ethnic nation undertaken in Chapter Four. Finally, the idea of a nation centric geopolitical discourse is tied to Chapter Five's dialogue on the role of the Kurdish nation in the global geopolitical discourses of colonialism, Cold War, and, presently, in what I tentatively call the 'rogue state' doctrine.

A review of nation(alism) studies

Before commencing this literature review in earnest, I think it is useful to offer a brief summary of nation(alism) studies' conceptualisation of nation and nationalism, in order to provide the reader a road-map with which to negotiate the terrain ahead. The following discussion is structured around six main themes that run through the literature. The first three of these refer to the internal dimensions of the nation, which are:

- (1) the psychological, emotive attachment of a people to a specific territory through prolonged occupation, resource use, and the projection of history onto this territory, which becomes a 'national homeland';
- (2) the adherence of a vast majority of a unique and ethnically distinct people to its own language, religion, customs, arts and music, etc., collectively known as culture, which commands the everyday life of the individual and the group; and
- (3) the universal awareness of the major historical events which have shaped all of the above facets of the nation.

While these themes go a long way to enabling a good conceptualisation of the nation, they do not specifically distinguish the nation from other human collectives, for example ethnic groups, which may also share the above traits. What makes a nation distinct is encapsulated in the fourth theme of the nation(alism) literature:

- (4) the establishment of a people as a distinct and unique political community, through the rise of an integrated economy with a single division of labour, a common oral and written *lingua franca*, a unified, organised religion, a mass, public culture, and the emergence of broad based political parties.

The fifth theme explains the phenomenon of nationalism as the political doctrine which drives the transformation from ethnic to political community, to nationhood status. This theme claims that nationalism:

- (5) emphasises a people's common ethnicity to unite, politicise, and mobilise the nation to achieve the ultimate objective of self-determination in the nation's own state.

My interpretation of this literature leads me to conclude that nationalism creates the nation, and therefore that it is the political doctrine of nationalism which distinguishes the nation. For this reason I reiterate my argument of conceptualising nation and nationalism as nation(alism).

I noted in the Introduction to this chapter that in today's world in which all territory is claimed by at least (and sometimes more) state. It is therefore necessary to distinguish between nations and nationalisms which are states and those which are not. This distinction is evident in one final theme in the nation(alism) literature:

- (6) the nationalism of a nation which has achieved statehood is described as official nationalism (and thus the nation is an official nation), while the nationalism of a nation which has not achieved statehood is described as ethnic nationalism (and thus the nation is an ethnic nation).

These six themes correspond to the structure of the following discussion: The first three themes are expanded on in 'A three dimensional typology of the nation'; the fourth is examined in 'Adding a fourth dimension: Distinguishing nation from *ethnie*'; the fifth in 'The political doctrine of nationalism'; and the sixth in 'Official and/versus ethnic nations'. But first, some introductory comments on the subject and subjectivity of nation(alism).

The subject(ivity) of nation(alism)

An array of difficulties present themselves when attempting to discuss briefly yet comprehensively the body of literature that I have collectively labelled 'nation(alism) studies'. The first and perhaps most serious problem is the sheer volume of this research, which makes it very difficult to cover exhaustively. Moreover, these writings include leading contributions from a vast range of academic disciplines including, *inter alia*, anthropology (eg, Eriksen 1993), geography (eg, Jackson and Penrose 1993), history (eg, Hobsbawm 1990), philosophy (eg, Gellner 1983), politics (eg, Kellas 1991),

sociology (eg, A.D. Smith 1986) and an array of sub- and inter- disciplinary works. Such diversity complicates research enormously, for the material is organised horizontally across these disciplines, not vertically under its own heading.

The great diversity of researchers interested in nation(alism) reflects the multifaceted character of the two concepts. For both "nation" and "nationalism" are simultaneously cultural, social, and political references (Connor 1990a:98; Ignatieff 1993:5; Jackson and Penrose 1993:1). As a consequence nation(alism) can be an extraordinarily subjective and situated phenomenon, giving it considerable spatial and temporal variation: Nation(alism)'s meaning is not the same in all places at one time nor the same at one place through time. The subjectivity and geographical variability of nation(alism) means that there is no universally accepted definition of either, just a plethora of possibilities for both.

These difficulties, however considerable they may appear, can be overcome. The mountainous research material problem is mitigated by focussing on several key themes - outlined above and examined fully below - that emerge in the literature, for example in works by B. Anderson (1983), Bhabha (1990), Breuilly (1994), Connor (1972, 1978, 1990a, 1990b), Diamond and Plattner (1994), Eriksen (1993), Gellner (1983, 1994), Hobsbawm (1990), Ignatieff (1993), Johnston, Knight, and Kofman (1988), Keating (1996), Kedourie (1990), Kellas (1991), Meadwell (1989), R. Pearson (1993), Penrose (1990, 1994), Penrose and May (1991), Renan (1990), Rogowski (1985), Ryan (1990, 1995), A.D. Smith (1971, 1979, 1982, 1986, 1991, 1992a, 1992b, 1993), Stokes (1993), Tiryakian and Nevitte (1985) and Williams and Kofman (1989). This list also negates the interdisciplinary problem, for these authors provide a reasonably comprehensive coverage of the numerous academic disciplines involved in nation(alism) studies.

The wide variety of perspectives included in the literature reviewed also enables the problem of nation(alism)'s multi-dimensional character to be simplified. With these works focussing on different but interrelated aspects of the nation(alism) phenomenon, one gets a substantive overall impression of its contemporary conceptualisation. From this picture it is possible to develop a general but sufficient understanding of nation(alism) that is employed not only in this chapter but for the remainder of this thesis. In turn, this schema alleviates the problem of 'defining' nation and nationalism. With no

such delusion of grandeur I do not attempt to propose universal definitions of this subjective and therefore highly variable phenomena. Rather, I present a *typology* of nation(alism) as a useful *representation* of the common themes that run through the literature.

One such theme is highly pertinent at this point, for it enables the 'objective', common traits of collective nation(alism)s to be reconciled with the subjective, unique characteristics of individual nation(alism)s. This theme is best represented by A.D. Smith's (1982:149 - 51) "core doctrine" of nation(alism) and "secondary theories" of nation(alism). A close parallel can also be drawn with Penrose's (1994:195) "general category" of nation(alism)s and "specific" nation(alism)s.

Whatever the nomenclature, it is essential to note that these are not distinct, mutually exclusive polities incorporating different aspects of the nation(alism) phenomenon. Far from it, in fact, because nation(alism) utilises a subjective interpretation of "core doctrine" dimensions to construct and perpetuate itself. The most famous treatise on the subjectivity of nation(alism) is undoubtedly Benedict Anderson's (1983) "imagined community" thesis. Anderson argues that the nation is an imagined community, and therefore, again, highly subjective, for four reasons:

- (1) individual's *imagine* themselves and their lives to be part of a much larger community;
- (2) that community is *imagined* as spatially bounded by finite but elastic boundaries, within which is their nation and beyond which is other nations;
- (3) within its own territory the nation is *imagined* as the only legitimate sovereign, and thus a nation's ultimate objective is its own nation-state; and
- (4) it is an *imagined* community, based on an historical territory, a common culture, and a shared sense of origin and destiny, which commands the complete loyalty of its members, transcending other social identities.

Anderson's imagined community proposition clearly includes the core doctrine - secondary theories of nation(alism). The idea of the nation as a 'community' hints at the former dimension, while the qualifier that this human grouping is 'imagined' is indicative of the latter dimension.

Although I have argued for the conceptualisation of a singular nation(alism) phenomenon, it is necessary for pedagogic reasons to separate, at least temporarily, this unitary concept into nation and nationalism. I therefore move from the subject(ivity) of nation(alism) into a discussion of three themes which provide a general, three dimensional typology of the *nation*.

A three dimensional typology of the nation

The nation(alism) literature commonly identifies numerous aspects of the nation, which I have grouped here under the three headings of territory and resources, ethnicity and culture, and historical geography. These categories, or dimensions of the nation, closely reflect those proposed by Penrose and May (1991:169 - 71), namely “physical environment”, “national character”, and “historical development”. I employ these separate but interrelated and mutually reinforcing categories so as to reduce the multifaceted nation to a more manageable subject for analysis. Each discussion will begin with the objective/core/general aspects of the particular dimension, then proceed to illustrate their subjective/secondary/specific aspects, with empirical examples of the latter provided for illustrative purposes.

Territory and resources

Perhaps the most obvious dimension of the nation, for political geographers anyway, is its spatiality, its existence in space (eg, Giddens 1985; Taylor 1993). But actually defining a nation's space is a very difficult task, a consequence of the non-congruence between nations and existing state boundaries, as demonstrated in Chapter One, and the subjectivity of the nation, which defies the use of purely objective map drawing criteria. Mapping the nation is therefore an extremely contentious exercise in subjective and inherently political cartography.

For individual nations, however, territory is much more than just ‘a place to live’. Through prolonged occupation of a particular space a nation is able to project its history and culture on to the(ir) landscape, providing permanent reminders of historical events to present and future generations (Kedourie 1985; Hobsbawm 1990; Penrose and May 1991). Thus through time a nation develops an extraordinarily powerful psychological attachment to its territory: An imagined community indeed.

The power of this devotion was emphatically demonstrated by Adolf Hitler during his twelve year reign as Fuhrer, when he was able to “make his appeals to the German people in the name of state (*Deutsches Reich*), nation (*Volksdeutsch*), or homeland (*Deutschland*), because all triggered the same emotional associations” (Connor 1978:382 - 3). The immense appeal of National Socialism was evident in its persistence, enabling “Germans to carry on a war long after it became evident that the cause was hopeless and that perseverance could only entail more deprivation, destruction, and death” (Connor 1978:385).

The role of territory in the national conscience can be equally powerful when a nation is, for whatever reason, *dislocated* from its ‘national homeland’. One pertinent, extreme example comes immediately to mind: The Jews and their Promised Land of Palestine. The Jewish Diaspora separated the nation from its crucial historical - religious sites throughout Palestine, especially the Holy City of Jerusalem. This dislocation was an all pervasive motivation behind the Zionist movement, established in the late nineteenth century with the specific objective of a Jewish return to the Promised Land and the establishment there of a Jewish nation-state. The horrific death of six million Jews in the Holocaust of World War Two empowered an emotional Jewish nation(alism) that created the state of Israel in May 1948. The Zionist triumph, however, necessitated the displacement of the Palestinians, for whom Palestine was an equally important national homeland. Indeed, the resulting Israeli - Palestinian conflict, now half a century old, has its sources in the fact that the territory of Palestine has been imbued with both Jewish and Muslim history and culture.

A second link between place and people is the specific natural resources that a territory provides to the nation. For these resources will undoubtedly exert some influence on the nation’s economy and social structure. In turn, sociocultural rules will act as a feedback loop, determining the type, rate, and means of resource use. Thus the nation “identifies itself with the land....so that the land and the people become a united entity” (Penrose and May 1991:170). Threats to ‘national resources’ will thus often be perceived as threats to the nation itself, and will be defended by assertions of the nation’s ‘natural right’ to continue using traditional resources. In a world of decreasing resource availability and accessibility, competing claims by nations, whether states or not, are

likely to increasingly be a source of conflict (Penrose and May 1991; Nietschmann 1993).

In summary, then, territory and resources help to define a nation's place in space and the interrelationship between a people and their homeland. Thus the name of the nation becomes immediately identifiable in the name of the national homeland: In our case study, for example, 'Kurdistan' literally means 'the land of the Kurds'.

Ethnicity and culture

The spatiality of the nation does not, however, provide us with the *basis* of the nation, nor how nations differ from other nations. It is widely recognised that nation's are set apart from each other by this second dimension, namely the interrelated concepts of ethnicity and culture (eg, Eriksen 1993; Gellner 1983; Hobsbawm 1990; Kellas 1991; and A.D. Smith 1971, 1986, and 1991). Indeed, following A.D. Smith's (1986) influential work, it is the idea of the ethnicity which provides the actual *origins* of the nation.

Ethnicity is crucial in defining the nation because of its ascriptive character: An individual's ethnic identity, their nationality, is determined by birth and cannot, therefore, be changed. Thus ethnicity has the enormous power of inclusion and exclusion, the nation constituting only those who are of common descent and omitting those of foreign blood, so creating an 'us' - 'them', 'we' - 'they' dichotomy (Ignatieff 1993). Moreover, ethnic identity is a powerful, even the most powerful, force which unifies people who share common physical traits - the visible, outward signs of a distinct community - and psychological attributes - the intangible, inner subjectivity of the imagined nation. Ethnicity therefore provides the basic but overriding identity for all members, subsuming all social cleavages (Connor 1972; Gellner 1983).

But despite appearances ethnicity is not an objective, anthropological criteria, for it too is stretched by subjective reasoning. The thread of ethnic identity most frequently pulled in this manner concerns the (supposedly) common, pure blood lineage from a unique, figurative 'Adam and Eve'. A nation is likely to claim such a "myth of descent" (A.D. Smith 1982:152), even though 'objective' anthropological and historical evidence may reject such propositions. The strength of the myth, however, overrides and renders

meaningless these 'scientific' observations. Connor (1978:380 - 81; emphasis added) provides an excellent illustrative example, suggesting that a nation's

"broadly held conviction concerning the group's singular origin need not and seldom will accord with factual data. Thus, the anthropologist may prove to (their) own satisfaction that there are several genetic strains within the Pushtun people who populate the Afghani - Pakistani border region and conclude therefrom that the group represents the variegated offspring of several peoples who have moved through the region. The *important fact*, however, is that the Pushtuns themselves are *convinced* that all Pushtuns are evolved from a single source and have remained essentially unadulterated. This is a matter which is known intuitively and unquestionably, a matter of *attitude* and *not* of fact".

The importance of ethnicity, then, is that it provides an individual's all transcending identity, a large extended family related by 'pure' blood ties which provides not only the highest identity, but security, protection, and a 'sense of belonging' (Ignatieff 1993).

Ignatieff (1993:8), however, notes that "common ethnicity, by itself, does not create social cohesion and community". Ethnicity, in other words, is not a sufficient condition for defining the nation. Thus other indicators of national identity are required. The nation(alism) literature identifies several such aspects, together constituting an adjunct of ethnicity that we can collectively refer to as 'culture' (Kedourie 1985; Hobsbawm 1990; A.D. Smith 1986). Two stand-out facets of this general term are language and religion, but also includes customs, folklore, arts and music, etc.

The ties between ethnicity and language seem intuitively obvious, for like territory a nation's language usually shares the name of its ethnicity. One of the first people to attempt to marry the concepts of ethnicity and nation, German philosopher Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744 - 1803), recognised and exemplified the importance of language when he claimed that "without its own language, a *Volk* (the German noun for nation) is an absurdity, a contradiction in terms" (Quoted in Penrose and May 1991:170). Thus language is seen as the major cultural expression of ethnicity, for "language *unites* the group, but also *distinguishes* it from other groups; it is the means of establishing a group's identity as a homogeneous unit" (Penrose and May 1991:170; Emphasis added). The French Revolution of 1788, as an illustration, established the

boundaries of the Republic of France on the spatial limits of the French language (Connor 1978).

Religion performs much the same function, assisting to create a sense of national solidarity and, again, to differentiate itself from other nations. As with ethnicity and language, the links between ethnicity and religion are often close. There is much correlation, for example, in the relationship between Arab ethnicity and the Islamic religion, but by no means is it a perfect match, for not all Muslims are Arabs. A pertinent case in point would be the virulent religious nation(alism) of the Persian Shi'a Muslims in Iran which, under the revolutionary leadership of Ayatollah Khomeini, established the Islamic Republic of Iran in 1979 (Cottam 1979). Religion, therefore, is another salient dimension in determining and distinguishing national identities.

The ethno-religious character of a nation is likely to be a major source of a great variety of customs, folklore, arts and music, etc. These additional national attributes influence the daily life of individuals, whose collective and consistent adherence to this national culture demonstrates their unified will to live as a nation. In the late nineteenth century Ernest Renan refers to the nation in this context as a "daily plebiscite" (Quoted in Tiryakian and Nevitte 1985:58). A mass, public culture thus provides yet another dimension for establishing and separating national identities (B. Anderson 1983).

Despite the apparent objectivity of these criteria, once again nationalism employs a subjective perspective on the make up of the nation. It is one of the greatest ironies, even contradictions, of nation(alism) that, while it claims to be a single, homogeneous entity on one or more of ethnicity, language, religion, and culture, the nation more often than not includes people and small groups of different blood, tongue, faith, or lifestyle (A.D. Smith 1991). In general, though, ethnicity and culture serve as a powerful dimension in defining a nation, the vast majority of whose members will share the same ethnic origins, language, religion, and cultural identity. These dimensions, by themselves or in any combination, are also what distinguishes one nation from other nations: They are modes of inclusion as well as exclusion.

Historical geography

The nation(alism) literature commonly identifies a third dimension of the nation, that of "historical development" (Penrose and May 1991:170), which provides the previous two essentially static dimensions with a temporal axis for analysis. The reasoning behind this third dimension is that nations continually evolve: They do not simply appear and remain constant once they have done so. To suggest that nations are temporally but not spatially variable is, of course, antithetical to a geographer's perspective. If nations evolve, the probable spatial variations in the necessary conditions for such development will mean that nations are not omnipresent, and if they continue to evolve temporarily they may also be able to do so spatially. For these reasons I have classified this dimension as 'historical geography', giving it both temporal *and* spatial axes. Despite the recognition of the need to allow for the spatial evolution of nations, it is the temporal aspect which undoubtedly dominates this dimension. In other words, the history of nations is all important, but particular historical experiences may also have spatial causes and consequences.

Conceptualising the historical geography of nations is perhaps best achieved by considering the two dimensions already discussed. The Jewish dislocation from their 'Promised Land' of Palestine and their post-Holocaust relocation to the state of Israel were clearly two interrelated watersheds in the historical geography of the *territorial* aspects of the Jewish nation, and are therefore now crucial parts of Jewish *history*. This example is illustrative of a broader point that migrations, forced or otherwise, play a significant role in the historical geography of nations.

Similarly, historical geography plays a central role in a nation's changing system of resource use. As technology increases through time, a nation's economy follows the general transition from an agrarian, to an industrial, to a post-industrial organisation. This development will clearly transform a nation's social structure, and much else (Gellner 1983). Thus the development of resources is a critical factor in the historical geography of nations.

Connor's (1978) brief discussion on the ethnic diversity of the Pushtuns demonstrates the historical geography of ethnicity. Clearly, the world is no longer (if it ever was) made up of mutually exclusive peoples who did not and do not engage in

intermarriage. As was noted above, however, such miscegenation and 'mixed blood' lines of descent do not force the abandonment of the perception that a nation is characterised by pure descent. Indeed, because nations *often* include their own 'minority' or 'impure' elements, one could argue that in order *to be* a nation such 'imperfections' must be present.

Given the strong links between ethnicity and language and religion, it is perhaps inevitable that a nation's tongue and faith are also affected by historical geography, in two ways. First, a nation may be able to develop its language from a mixture of local dialects into a *lingua franca*, to establish a single common vocabulary and syntax (B. Anderson 1983; Entessar 1989). Again, the French language is a pertinent example here (Connor 1978). Second, by coming into contact with other languages a nation can expand its vocabulary through linguistic borrowing. To illustrate this phenomenon I need go no further than my/our own English tongue: Just how many words in this vocabulary are *not* derived from Latin, Greek, Old French, etc? Religion, too, is an aspect of the nation which can be modified by historical geography, and in much the same way as language. That is, a nation's religion can change, or rather evolve, as a result of internal dynamics. Or, and more catastrophically, a nation can have a new religion thrust upon it by a conquering nation. As we shall see in the next chapter, for example, the Kurds were "forcibly converted" to the "new religion of Islam" by the victorious Arab invaders in the seventh century CE (O'Ballance 1996:1).

With a nation's language and religion subject to historical geography it is logical that this metamorphosis can be extended to its overall culture. Through changes in religion, in particular, customs and folklore are most likely to be adapted. Arts and music are also modified by contact with the outside world. Yet these can take on a significance of such magnitude that the new cultural aspects appear to be of a nation's own making. Taylor (1993:201) cites an extraordinary example:

"The national costume of Scotland is perhaps the most widely known of all European nations. All readers will associate tartan kilts with Scottish clans. The general assumption is that they represent the ancient clothing of Scottish kinship groups. It will come as a surprise to many readers, therefore, to find out that the tartan originates from Holland, kilts from England, and there were no 'clan tartans' before 1844".

What this brief discussion of the historical geography dimension of a nation demonstrates, of course, is the concept of national history. A nation's perception of its history is incredibly subjective, consistent with the subjectivity of the preceding two dimensions. 'Objective' analyses of a nation's history is rendered meaningless by the nation's capacity to construct an 'imagined geography' (Said 1978; Gregory 1995) of all dimensions of itself.

This three dimensional typology of the nation, in which its multifaceted character has been simplified into the three faces of territory and resources, ethnicity and culture, and historical geography, has demonstrated that statehood is *not* a prerequisite to nationhood, for nowhere in this framework does the concept of state appear. Rather, nation, as presented here, can be conceptualised as an historic community of people who believe themselves to be united by a unique combination of ethnic, language, religious, and cultural ties, sharing a common territory and resources, and who have experienced the same historical processes and events.

Adding a fourth dimension: Distinguishing "nation" from "ethnie"

This conceptualisation of nation still does not, however, distinguish the nation from other human collectives. An ethnic group, for example, could also share all of the above attributes, or at least a sufficient combination of them to also warrant description as a nation. Take, as an illustrative case in point, the Maori of New Zealand. As a unity they clearly have a deep association with *Aotearoa*, their 'land of the long white cloud', while as separate tribal entities their historical attachment to local environments is expressed in the concept of '*tangata whenua*', the 'people of the land'. Similarly, '*twi*', or tribe, are tied to territory through sociocultural rules of resource use codified in the concepts of '*taonga*', or 'treasures', '*mahinga kai*', or 'food gathering areas', and '*kaitiakitanga*', or 'guardianship of resources'. The Maori also share, most obviously, a common ethnicity and language which distinguish them from other groups. Religion is closely tied to the Maori myth of creation, whereby *Rangi*, the sky father, and *Papa*, the earth mother, produced six children represented in the Maori perception of an integrated physical and human environment: *Tane* (forests), *Tu* (people), *Rongo* (cultivated foods), *Haumia* (wild foods), *Tangaroa* (sea and seafood), and *Tawhiri* (wind and storms). All these aspects of Maori culture exerts a strong influence on the their customs, folklore, arts and music, etc. Finally, in terms of historical geography, two major events can be

cited as watersheds in Maori history: Their mythical migration from Hawaii in the seven canoes, or *waka*, and their subsequent occupation of *Aotearoa*, and the arrival of the European and the dislocation and disruption of Maori society as a consequence of colonisation (Barlow 1991; Grey 1994).

Does this mean that all ethnic groups are nations? The three dimensional typology presented above would seem to hint at such a correlation. Moreover, in his treatise on *The ethnic origins of nations* (1986) A.D. Smith persuasively argues for an extraordinarily close relationship between ethnic groups, or to use his French terminology, '*ethnie*', and nations. A.D. Smith's conceptualisation of *ethnie* as the *origins* of nations enables all *ethnie* to be described as "potential" or "would be" nations (1986:154; Connor 1978), while some have achieved this status and can be duly entitled 'real' or 'actual' nations. Thus A.D. Smith, and the nation(alism) literature in general, recognise that no, not all *ethnie* are nations.

So what, then, distinguishes a nation from an *ethnie*? It is vital to make this distinction blatantly obvious because there are in fact significant, essential differences between the two communities. In order to continue my typological interpretation and representation, these divergences are collectively presented through the addition of an all important fourth dimension, that of political community, to distinguish nations from *ethnie*. This distinction is crucial not only because of the fundamental differences between nation and *ethnie* but, having criticised the conflation and interutilisation of nation and state, despite their inherent dissimilarities, we must exercise extraordinary caution and not fall into the same linguistic trap and simply equate nation with *ethnie*.

Political community

The common conceptualisation that as "potential nations" *ethnie* provide the origins of 'actual' nations implies some type of transition from one to the other. This fourth dimension represents the evolution of an *ethnie* into a single, unified, distinct political community called the nation (Canovan 1996). The general features of this *ethnie* - nation development and distinction are the focus of this discussion.

The processes of *ethnie* metamorphosis are closely linked with the forces of modernism (Gellner 1983; A.D. Smith 1986, 1991; Bhabha 1990). As such the

establishment of a nation is more than just an *ethnie*'s political evolution, for it involves economic, social, and cultural change as well, even *prior to* any political development. For example, economic change will involve the general shift from an agrarian, to an industrial, to a post-industrial organisation (Gellner 1983). Closely associated with this transition will be land reform, whereby traditional ownership patterns are dismantled and replaced with private, market oriented tenure. Economic and land ownership transformation will create an urbanised, educated intelligentsia, giving rise to a single division of labour (A.D. Smith 1991)

This economic integration of the many diverse, small scale entities making up an *ethnie* is matched by the forces of social assimilation, especially in relation to language and religion (Connor 1972). The diverse dialects likely to characterise an *ethnie*'s overall language will be subsumed into a single *lingua franca* through education, literature, and the mass media, a process particularly emphasised by B. Anderson (1983). The French language is again a pertinent example here. Similarly, an *ethnie*'s religion is likely to be a patchwork quilt, with local peculiarities within a broader, single faith. Again, these idiosyncrasies will be transformed into a unitary religious dogma, reflecting a middle path or general consensus, via policies enforcing an 'official' religion and, where the dominant strand of an *ethnie*'s religion demands, on the grounds of religious unity. Once more, the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran is a good case in point, for it vehemently asserted *Ithna'asheri* as the 'one true path' within Shi'a Islam, forsaking all other strands thereof (Cottam 1979). With linguistic and religious anomalies merged into single entities it is perhaps inevitable that an *ethnie* come nation will move increasingly towards cultural homogeneity. Thus a single national dress, national flag, national anthem, and national holiday(s) will be adopted (A.D. Smith 1991; Breuilly 1904s).

Interwoven with all these threads of the *ethnie* - nation evolution is, of course, that of political development. This aspect, perhaps individually the most important, will be characterised by the simultaneous emergence of popular participation, broad based political parties, and governmental institutions and bureaucracies. The growing involvement of the masses in 'national' politics helps create a sense of common purpose, if not a feeling of solidarity. This growing sentiment will be reflected in and perpetuated by the rise of a large variety of mass political organisations, usually founded by the urban intelligentsia but gradually expanding to envelope the general populace, that will seek to

dominate the national agenda. In turn, the governmental administration will establish and enforce a system of common legal rights and duties on its members (A.D. Smith 1991).

The conceptualisation of nations evolving out of *ethnie* leads to the inevitable question of *when* does an *ethnie* become a nation? This important problem receives very little attention in the literature (Connor 1990a), the prime focus being the question ‘*what* is a nation?’ (Renan 1990). But the dilemma of when an *ethnie* warrants description as a nation has received particular attention by Walker Connor (1990a). The problem, essentially, is this: Does an *ethnie* become a nation at the instant a prominent leader espouses nationalist rhetoric, for example by calling for self-determination? Or is an *ethnie* not a nation until 100 percent of the nation’s population declare their nationality and commit themselves to the nationalist struggle for autonomy or statehood? Connor (1990a:95, 97) rules out a positive answer to the first possibility by suggesting that “nationalism is a mass not an elite phenomenon”, and therefore that

“a history of national consciousness should not, like a history of philosophy, simply describe the thought of a limited number of eminent (people) without regard to the extent of their following. As in the histories of religion, we need to know what response the masses have given to different doctrines”.

But this persuasive argument does not force the acceptance of the second alternative. To adopt a 100 percent threshold would certainly be a very stringent and rather impractical criteria, for an *ethnie* could well be described as a nation before this point. I therefore argue that the answer to the question ‘when is a nation’ is to emphasise the *temporal transition* from *ethnie* to nation. Thus I see the nation as *beginning* with the first documented call for self-determination, and *evolving* from then into a mass movement predicated on achieving that objective. This typology allows for a ‘weak’ nation(alism) at the start of this process, building into a ‘strong’ nation(alism) sometime along the way.

All these transitions contribute to the creation, from *ethnie* beginnings, of a nation as a single, unified, distinct political community. The driving force behind this transformation is the political doctrine of nationalism, the specific topic of the next subsection.

The political doctrine of nationalism

The study of nationalism in nation(alism) studies is almost as variegated as the phenomenon itself. However, as Latawski (1995:5) notes, “if a common thread of agreement can be found among nationalism’s interpreters it can be found in the understanding of nationalism as a political doctrine”. For this reason, and also because conceptualising nationalism as a political doctrine provides the best path for advancing this chapter, I adopt such a position.

This discussion begins by establishing a two dimensional “core doctrine” of nationalism, which is then used to structure the following explanation. The first of these, which I term the ‘internal’ dimension, illustrates how nationalism creates the nation by emphasising ethnicity as the basis for ‘national identity’. This strategy employs a subjective, ethnocentric reading of the historical geography of the nation, linking also to the territory and resources and cultural dimensions of the nation. The second aspect, which I call the ‘external’ dimension, demonstrates how nationalism invokes the principle of self-determination to provide the link between the nation and the state. For nationalism asserts that the nation, as a distinct and unique political community, has a ‘natural right’ to its complete fulfilment through the establishment of its own true nation-state. While these two dimensions of nationalism have different foci, it is important to note that these are not separate processes but are concomitant, simultaneous aspects of the political doctrine of nationalism.

According to A.D. Smith’s (1982:150) “core doctrine”, nationalism holds that every individual belongs to a nation, and that this “national identity” (A.D. Smith 1991) is *the* single most important, and overwhelmingly so. Of all the various identities that an individual can hold, it is that of ethnicity which persists, because it is ascribed by birth and thus cannot be changed. An individual may be able to convert to another religion, learn other languages, adopt other cultures, live in other places, improve their socioeconomic status, even change their gender, but their ethnicity cannot be exchanged. Moreover, and as a consequence of its omnipresence, ethnicity provides an all powerful, common identity for people of different classes, occupations, ages, genders, and sexualities.

It is this common denominator of ethnicity which nationalism emphasises and disseminates in its internal unification policies aimed at transforming the *ethnie* into the nation. As a unifying force ethnicity not only acts to unify current generations, but also provides continuity between past, present, and future generations (Kedourie 1985; Canovan 1996). Nationalism's key strategy in this regard is to glorify the nation's alleged "myth of descent", which essentially traces (entirely subjectively and in a manner that does not exclude future re-interpretations) the historical geography of the nation, from time immemorial to the present, and including a vision of the future (A.D. Smith 1982:152 - 53).

This "narration of the nation" (Bhabha 1990) pinpoints the nation's ethnic origins in time and space, and commonly installs a single, spiritual, god-like ancestor as the forbearer of the whole nation. The Ethiopians, for example, claim descent from the Lion of Judah, the Jews from Abram of Ur (A.D. Smith 1982:153). Following this ancient beginning comes a time when the first national hero(es) courageous, self-sacrificing deeds liberated the people from foreign control and exploitation. Hence the importance of Joan of Arc in French nationalism, and William Wallace in Scottish nationalism¹. This age of heroism established a great, glorious, and free historical nation with a majestic and unique language, religion, and culture.

The next stanza in nationalism's myth of descent reads like the story of Lucifer, of the proverbial Paradise Lost. For with the demise of the national hero(es) the nation as a whole descends into servitude and slavery, its language, religion, and culture decline in prestige, and the nation may even be exiled from its homeland. Nationalism portrays the new masters as either completely alien, the local puppets of foreign powers, or at least as unrepresentative of the nation (Kellas 1991). In this "myth of decline" (A.D. Smith 1982:153) the nation lies dormant in a deep sleep (Buckley 1994).

And modern nationalism is the alarm clock awakening the sleeping giant, seeking to reverse this fall from Heaven, and to return the nation to its former glory. Through this "myth of rebirth" (A.D. Smith 1982:153) a new generation of national hero(es) lead a modern nationalism that attempts to reclaim the language, religion, culture, and where

¹ After viewing the film *Braveheart* during the year I just *had* to mention William Wallace, for it is from the Wallace clan my minuscule proportion of Scottish blood is derived!

the people have been displaced, the national homeland of the nation. Hence, for example, in 1789 the French peasants-come-revolutionists stormed the Bastille and overthrew a hated monarchy, installing a popular government and establishing the Republic of France, and the numerous cases of decolonisation in Africa and Asia in the 1950s and '60s, which threw off the repressive yolk of direct foreign control. Thus modern nationalism is more like Lazarus, its myth of common descent legitimating its call for national mobilisation in order to write the epilogue to this narrative of the nation: The restoration of the nation to its rightful place as a unified, distinct, and free social, cultural, and political entity, and its everlasting existence as such.

This aspiration brings us to the external aspect of nationalism, for its fulfilment depends, in the ultimate, upon outside recognition of the legitimacy of such objectives. In this regard the "core doctrine" of nationalism holds that the world is naturally divided into unique nations, and that world peace and stability is dependent upon the freedom of all nations. The strategy most commonly employed to voice the validity of this twofold contention is to invoke the political principle of self-determination. For nationalism claims that the nation has a natural right, *as a nation*, to determine its own affairs, free of foreign interference, and in accordance with its own sociocultural, religious, and/or political discourses. Moreover, nationalism asserts that it is only through the universal implementation of self-determination that all nations can become free and thus live in a harmonious global society (A.D. Smith 1982:150).

It is through this principle of self-determination that nationalism provides the link between nation and state. Gellner (1983:1) simply yet powerfully summarises nationalism as a "political principle which holds that the political and national unit should be congruent". Furthermore, nationalism usually holds that the nation itself is not complete without its own state (G.E. Smith 1994a:404). Thus the establishment of a true nation-state, where all and only members of a nation reside within the(ir) state, has "a central place in terms of the objectives of nationalism" (Latawski 1995:7). While a nation-state may certainly be every nationalism's ideal goal, the nation(alism) literature recognises that in certain circumstances this essentially separatist ideology may not be practicable. For reasons of *Realpolitik*, therefore, "the (nationalism) doctrine leaves open the form (and content) of self-determination" (A.D. Smith 1971:23 - 4). Cultural autonomy or

political federation *within* existing state boundaries are obvious, less severe alternatives to secession.

Nationalist demands for self-determination will therefore involve, somewhat axio- and auto- matically, the state government(s) playing (usually the reluctant) host to the 'dissident' nation. But the latter will often seek a wider audience for their claims than the former, with nationalism often appealing to global powers and even that loftiest of all political communities, the international community. Such pleas seek external and influential recognition and support of the nation's struggle for self-determination. Endorsement of a nation's quest for freedom is likely to depend greatly on the specific geopolitical interests of the outside powers.

In summary, then, nationalism's simultaneous invocation of an internal myth of common descent and external demands for self-determination combine to form an extraordinarily powerful force that drives at least the political dimension of an *ethnie*'s transformation into a nation. For nationalism's appeal to a nation's common ethnicity, historical origins, glorious past, present day repression, and future triumphant destiny all inspire a collective, emotional, and positive response from the masses: Political parties will rise, nationalist propaganda will be increasingly disseminated, and thousands will take up the struggle in defence of the nation. Similarly, nationalism's demands for autonomy, federation, or independence will provide a tangible target for national mobilisation, a sense of common purpose in achieving the nation's ultimate fate. Thus as a political doctrine nationalism looks both backwards and forwards - in Nairn's (1977) metaphor, nationalism is the modern Janus - as well as both inside and outside in order to transform an *ethnie* into a political community called the nation. It is possible to conclude, therefore, with the provocative suggestion that *nationalism* not only creates the nation, hence nation(alism), but - especially in its demand for national self-determination - is also the distinguishing characteristic between a nation and an *ethnie*.

Official nations and/versus ethnic nations

It is critical to discuss at this point one final theme in the nation(alism) literature, which recognises that different nationalisms not only share "core doctrines" but may also have similar "secondary theories". There exists subsets of nationalism: In A.D. Smith's (1971:193) words, nationalism is "a single category containing subvarieties, genus, and

species, a diversity within a unity". Or in Ignatieff's (1993:14) terms, nationalism "is not one thing in many disguises but many things in many disguises". A.D. Smith (1971:216 - 18) himself distinguishes between three such subsets, existing along a continuum from 'ethnic' - nationalism centred on the *ethnie* - to 'territorial' - nationalism built around a pre-existing state skeleton - with a third 'mixed' variety in between. Kellas (1991:51 - 52) offers a respective typology of an 'ethnic' nationalism, an 'official' nationalism, and with a 'social' nationalism in the middle. For the purposes of this discussion (chapter and thesis) it is sufficient to conceptualise two subsets of nationalism which, following Kellas (1991), I have named 'official' and 'ethnic' nationalism. The following discussion examines the general features of official and ethnic nationalism, and - crucially for this thesis - why the two are likely, indeed almost certain, to come into conflict.

Official nationalism is conceptualised as those nationalisms which represent a state, or, more specifically, a nation that has achieved statehood. An official *nation*, therefore, controls all facets of the state apparatus; the legislature, the courts, the bureaucracy, and the military.

As demonstrated in Chapter One, an official nation's state territory is unlikely to be ethnically homogenous, its boundaries will incorporate any number of *ethnie*, as potential nations, and/or even actual nations. Such ethnically plural, even multinational, states are particularly common in Africa and Asia, where colonial cartography drew state boundaries with little if any regard for pre-existing ethnic maps. Different indigenous *ethnie* and nations were consequently united and divided. In the wave of decolonisation during the 1950s and '60s the departing colonial power frequently handed the reins of government to one favoured indigenous group, who had often beaten off other local contenders. Thus upon gaining independence scores of official nations faced the immediate challenge posed by the divisive ethnic/national plurality of their state's territory and population.

In an attempt to overcome these fractures official nations employed - and still do employ - a variety of modernising, centralising policies aimed at the social, cultural, economic, linguistic, religious, and political integration of the state's population. Collectively known as either 'nation-building' or 'nation-formation' (eg, Connor 1972; Canovan 1996; Keating 1996; Penrose 1990), these strategies effectively seek to develop

a nation based on an overriding affiliation to the state. In other words, official nation(alism) uses nation-building to create a true nation-state, with a single national identity from which no deviation is tolerated.

Ethnic nationalism, on the other hand, is conceptualised as those nationalisms that represent those nations which are *not* states. An ethnic *nation*, therefore, controls no aspect of any state apparatus and are the very targets of official nationalism's nation-formation strategies.

But what ethnic nationalism does have on its side is the immense unifying power of ethnic identity, to politicise and mobilise the population (Connor 1972, 1978). Contrary to the expectations of official nationalism and modernist predictions, ethnic nationalism has not only persisted but *strengthened* in the face of twentieth century progress. Indeed, many ethnic nationalisms, particularly in the 'Third World' but by no means exclusively there², can be said to have risen in response to, and against, the combined forces of modernism, centralism, and nation-formation. As we shall see in the Kurdish case study, this is certainly a powerful explanation of the emergence of Kurdish ethnic nationalism from the late nineteenth century.

Given ethnic nationalism's opposition to official nationalism, it is not surprising - perhaps it is even inevitable - that the evolution of ethnic nations has frequently escalated into overt and violent conflict with official nations. This conflict can be conceptualised in terms of competing political ideologies. An official nation, empowered with territorial sovereignty over a space often far greater than its own national homeland, seeks to assert and maintain its control over this additional area. In contrast, an ethnic nation located in those extra regions will assert its natural right to self-determination, to claim its national homeland to the exclusion of all others. Thus official nationalism maintains its right of

² The literature freely talks about the rise of ethnic nationalism in the developed states of Western Europe and North America, previously thought of as quintessential nation-states, for example: Scottish (Keating 1996) and Northern Irish (Ignatieff 1993) nationalism in Great Britain; Catalan nationalism in France (Keating 1996); Frisian nationalism in Holland (Penrose 1990); and Quebecois nationalism in Canada (Keating 1996). Similarly, despite grand theories of nation-formation, Marxism - Leninism has also failed to purge ethnic nationalism in the 'Second World' states of the former Soviet Union and eastern Europe. Here, ethnic nationalism has undergone a great resurgence since the collapse of communism in 1989, which is also reflected in the literature. For example, in the Ukraine (Ignatieff 1993); across almost all of east-central Europe (Griffiths 1993; Latawski 1995); and especially in the former Yugoslavia (eg, Griffiths 1993; Ignatieff 1993).

territorial sovereignty over the whole state and the population, while ethnic nationalism maintains its right to *self-determination* in its national homeland: Two diametrically opposed political doctrines headed for a seemingly unavoidable clash.

And when such violent clashes do occur they contribute significantly to the construction of the ethnic nation. For ethnic nationalism is able to marry the official nation's military strategies of nation-formation to nationalism's general idea of an oppressed nation struggling to free itself from foreign domination. Ethnic nationalism can then portray the onslaught as unjust, tyrannical, and a serious threat to the very existence of the nation. And, as the core doctrine of nationalism also enables, the only way to 'save the nation' is to fulfil its destiny as an independent state. The specific battles and the overall conflict will thus be of great importance in the historical geography of the nation, in the transition from *ethnie* to overt political community. Indeed, to recall A.D. Smith's (1986:39) words:

"It is not society or ethnicity that determines war, but conflict itself which determines the sense and shape of ethnicity. War may not create the original cultural differences, but it sharpens and politicises them, turning what previously were (*ethnie*) into genuine integrated (nations), aware of their identities and destinies".

Despite the likelihood and importance of conflict between official and ethnic nations, such confrontations are, as demonstrated in Chapter One, excluded from conflict research's classification of international conflict on the grounds that one of the participants is not a state. I seek to remedy this rather arbitrary categorisation in the next section by developing a reconceptualised international conflict.

A nation-centric glossary of terms

This discussion demands and empowers a post-structural analysis of three of the most fundamental terms in international relations: Nation, nationalism, and international. For no longer is it possible to automatically equate and conflate nation with state; no longer can nationalism be seen as loyalty to the state; and no longer can international denote simply inter-state relations. What is developed here, therefore, is a nation centric glossary of terms that is employed in this thesis.

Re-signifying “nation” and “nationalism”

The above discussion has made it abundantly clear that the contemporary conceptualisation of the nation in nation(alism) studies is far more than simply the population of a state. It is therefore necessary to use “nation” advisedly and certainly not as a simple synonym for “state” or “nation-state”. This distinction does not suggest that “nation” and “state” are mutually exclusive, hence the idea of ‘official nations’. But it recognises that while official nations dominate the state, they are not necessarily the only nation within that state’s boundaries. The noun “nation” is therefore used in accordance with the typology presented above; that is, as a distinct and unique political community seeking national fulfilment, as an ethnic nation, through self-determination or, as an official nation, through territorial sovereignty. To reiterate, it is *not* used to refer merely to the whole population of a state, nor will it be used interchangeably with “state” or “nation-state”.

The noun “nationalism” is similarly re-signified, for the preceding section also made it crystal clear that the contemporary conceptualisation of nationalism is somewhat different from the notion of loyalty to the state. Indeed, if “nationalism” signifies individual and collective loyalty to some greater community, then it is the nation, and not the state, which is the focus of such allegiance. Moreover, nationalism as a political doctrine demonstrates the need to reconceptualise its meaning as an *intense* identification with the nation. But again this distinction does not suggest that nationalism cannot denote an equally powerful loyalty to the state, thus the concept of ‘official nationalism’. The noun “nationalism” is therefore used to refer to individual and collective loyalty to the nation and to the political doctrine which pursues national self-determination (or territorial sovereignty), and *not* to signify the supposed allegiance of a state’s entire population to that state.

The separate terms of nation and nationalism, with their re-signified meanings, will however be seldom used individually. The reason for this is that, as I introduced in Chapter One and explored further in this chapter, I place particular emphasis on the idea that it is the *nationalist* movement which politicises an *ethnie* and transforms it into a *nation*. Nationalism creates the nation, which perpetuates and strengthens its own nationalism, furthering the construction of the nation. Thus to write nation and nationalism, to present them separately, fails to represent the intimate interrelationship

between the two. Hence I write *nation(alism)*, which should be read as both *nation* and *nationalism*. While on occasion this may sound strange, even grammatically incorrect, I maintain its use to better portray the confluence of the terms. Only when circumstances demand will specific reference be made to nation and nationalism.

Reconstructing “international”

The above conceptualisation of the nation not only runs counter to the conventional meaning of the term but also against that of the adjective “international”. Separating the concepts of nation and state enables “international’s” constructed meaning of “inter - nation-state” (or, given our rejection of the term “nation-state”, more simply “inter-state”) to be re-constructed to represent what it describes - relations between nations. Once again, this re-construction does not exclude reference to relations between states, for this is possible by conceiving of such interactions as between two (or more) official nations. What it does do is *expand* the meaning of “international” by including relations between all nations, regardless of whether they are states or not. Thus the state centric objective is written as ‘international’, the inverted commas signifying that “inter-state” is what is really meant, while the nation centric adjective is written *international*, the italics signifying the *absence* of the hitherto assumed *presence* of the state conjoint.

As *international* signifies relations between at least two official nations, one official and one ethnic nation, or two ethnic nations, then “international conflict” represents conflict in any one of these dyads. Thus *international* conflict does not omit conflict between states, but conceptualises such events as conflict between two (or more) official nations. The inclusion of conflict between official and ethnic nations and conflict between ethnic nations therefore *extends* conflict research’s state-centric conceptualisation of ‘international’ conflict, proposing instead a nation-centric, reconceptualised *international* conflict. This idea of international conflict, of course, brings us to the Kurdish case study example to be presented in the following three chapters.

Conclusion: Towards the Kurdish case study

The Kurdish case study provides a highly pertinent, illustrative example of an ethnic (Kurdish) versus official (Persian, Arab, and Turkish) *international* conflict. This conclusion makes several important points in order to establish some linkages between the predominantly theoretical discussion in this chapter to the predominantly empirical discussions of the next three. First, the three dimensional typology of the nation outlined above corresponds to the three sections of the regional geography of Kurdistan presented in Chapter Three. Second, the Kurds' transition through three distinct but related stages from an *ethnie* into a nation is examined in Chapter Four through the lens of the actual international conflict between the Kurds and the various Persian, Arab, and Turkish governments. Chapter Four identifies three distinct but related stages in the evolution of Kurdish nation(alism). Third, Chapter Five analyses the role of Kurdish nation(alism) in the three global scale geopolitical discourses that have overlayed this *international* conflict, namely colonialism, Cold War, and the rogue state doctrine.

I would also like to make some preliminary comments concerning the material included (and excluded) in the following case study chapters. What can be and is presented within the time and space constraints of this thesis is only a small slice of Kurdish history. I have selected the pieces used here in terms of their importance in regard to the argument(s) of this thesis. This practice may lead to the criticism that this is but a 'selective history' of Kurdish politics with only those aspects that fit my argument included in the discussion. It is not my intent, however, to present a biased 'edited highlights package' of Kurdish politics in order to strengthen my case. Such an approach would quite obviously contradict the principles and purpose of academic research. I therefore pronounce that any omissions of what the initiated reader may believe to be salient aspects of Kurdish politics have been made because of this thesis' time and space constraints and my theoretical argument. For it must be remembered that this is *not* a comprehensive history of the Kurds, but an example of an *international* conflict that challenges conflict research's conventional understanding of this phenomenon.

Finally, because this thesis uses nations and not states as its unit of analysis, I draw attention here to some crucial terminological practices employed throughout the case study. First, I will take care to refer to the "Persian", "Arab", and "Turkish" *nations*, rather than to "Iran", "Iraq", and "Turkey", which are obviously *states*. In

particular, it is necessary to avoid reference to the “government of Iran/Iraq/Turkey”, for such terms imply that each government has full control over all of their state’s territory, and that they are the legitimate representative of all people resident within their territorial boundaries. Use of such terms would, therefore, contradict the nation centric map of political space that I am proposing, fail to take account of the Kurds’ consistent and vehement denial of state sovereignty in Kurdistan, and give the untenable and completely erroneous impression that the Kurds hold equal political and cultural rights and are legitimately represented by these three state governments. I therefore avoid such terms and instead use phrases like “the government in Tehran/Baghdad/Ankara”, or “the Persian/Arab/Turkish government”, which overcome the above problems because they refer only to the specific location of the government, who that government represents, and who controls that government. I cannot, of course, escape completely the state-centric discourse of international relations, however, and for this reason it is necessary, on occasion, to use the state names of Iran, Iraq, and Turkey. In such circumstances these titles will be used only to refer to the territorial unit of the state, and not the state government. Nevertheless, I shall endeavour to keep these instances to an absolute minimum.

Chapter Three

The stateless nation: A regional geography of Kurdistan

“(The Kurds are) just as proud, independent, and thievish as their ancestors. They are as devotedly attached to their mountains as the Scots or Swiss, and like the former, they are divided into clans or septs, acknowledging the supremacy of their chiefs, who are regarded with the same devotion, and followed with the same blind zeal which used to distinguish the Highlanders in former days. They are proud, haughty, and overbearing exactly in proportion to their ignorance, and like our own clans of old, despise more or less all arts but those of war and plunder, and all professions but that of arms”.

James Baillie Fraser in *Mesopotamia and Assyria* (1842)¹

Introduction

This first case study chapter introduces the Kurds and Kurdistan at the local scale. I will do this via a regional geography that flesh out the three dimensional typology of the nation presented in Chapter Two. This discussion is therefore divided into three sections - Place, People, and Partition - which respectively examine the territory and resources, ethnicity and culture, and historical geography of the Kurdish nation.

After locating Kurdistan in the global and Middle Eastern spatial contexts the Place section discusses at some length the problems and politics of precisely delineating Kurdistan. These difficulties illustrate the spatial *fluidity* of the nation in contradiction to the spatial rigidity of the state. Nevertheless I will offer my own map of Kurdistan in recognition that I have to draw its boundary *somehow/where*. This boundary will emphatically demonstrate the spatial incongruence between nation and state, thus pointing to an alternative map of political space. Having mapped Kurdistan its physical geography and major cities and towns are outlined.

The People section then introduces the ethnic origins, language, and religion of the Kurds. Just as the Place section notes the difficulty in accurately bounding Kurdistan, the People section discusses the problems and politics of determining the contemporary Kurdish population. And just as Kurdistan had to be demarcated an estimation of Kurdish numbers must also be, and therefore is, given.

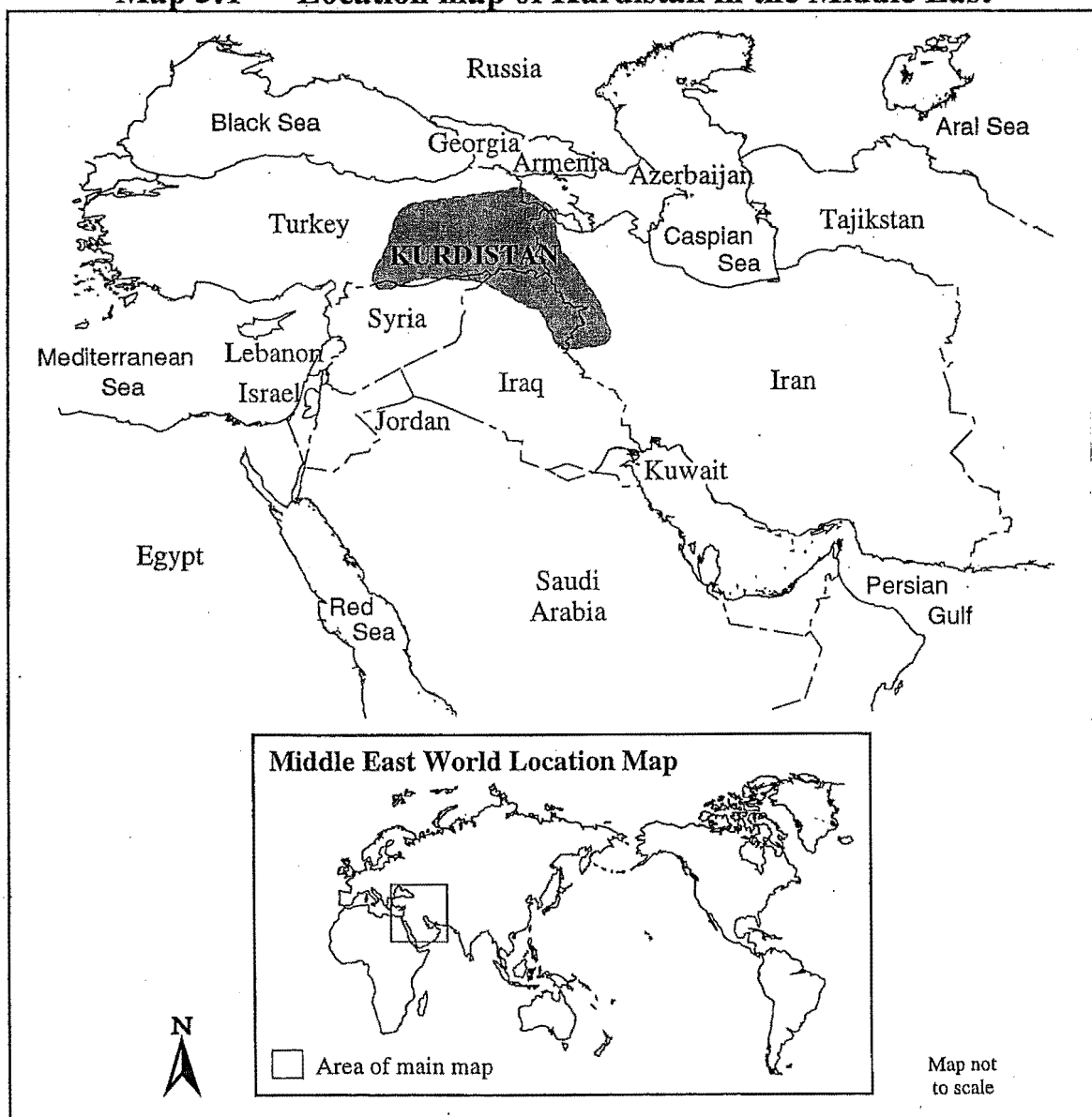
Finally, I draw specific attention to what is undoubtedly the most important facet of the Kurdish nation's historical geography: The Partition of the Kurds and Kurdistan into no less than six states. For it is the division of the Kurds by 'international' boundaries and the consequent denial of an independent state of Kurdistan that has both boosted Kurdish nation(alism) and created international conflict with the surrounding state governments. This nation(alism) and conflict is especially evident in the three states of Iran, Iraq, and Turkey, a direct consequence of the fact that Kurdish territory and population constitute not only significant proportions of the state's totals but also the overwhelming majority of Kurdistan and Kurds. This Partition section therefore presents three 'mini' regional geographies of the Kurdish nation in the states of Iran, Iraq, and Turkey, including the ethnic, religious, and linguistic sources of the *international* conflict between the Kurdish ethnic and Persian, Arab, and Turkish official nations.

Place

Location

At both the global and Middle Eastern scales Kurdistan's location might be described as peripheral. Globally Kurdistan lies at the distant margins of southeastern Europe, the southern borderlands of the Caucasus, and the northern extremities of the Middle East (see inset, Map 3:1). In the Middle Eastern context Kurdistan's location is also largely peripheral, occupying the southeastern corner of Turkey, southern parts of Armenia and Azerbaijan, a northwestern sliver of Iran, the northern quarter of Iraq, and northeastern margins of Syria (Map 3:1).

Map 3:1 Location map of Kurdistan in the Middle East



Source: Author.

Mapping Kurdistan - Problems and politics

To precisely delineate Kurdistan on a larger scale map, however, is not as simple a task as it may sound from this general description. The critical but simple reason for this difficulty is that Kurdistan has never been and certainly is not today a state, thus it is not a pre-existing territorial unit of the conventional world political map. Instead, what is being attempted here is a mapping of political space in accordance with the Kurdish national homeland, which straddles contiguous territory in six states and is thus in discordance with these entities. Moreover, within each of these six states the Kurds do not live strictly within any internal administrative boundaries². As a result of both these factors there is no codified spatial delineation of Kurdistan.

The absence of a clear and consistently used demarcation of Kurdistan gives rise to two distinct problems for attempting to establish such a map. First, the spatial expanse of Kurdistan, and therefore the position of its boundary, will vary according to the 'definition' of Kurdistan used. Secondly, the temporal variable means that boundaries drawn using the same definition at different times will not necessarily result in the same demarcation of Kurdistan.

The first step, then, in delineating Kurdistan is to decide upon a suitable definition for bounding Kurdistan. One such method, and the most obvious and appropriate one at that, springs immediately to mind: A demographic map, whereby Kurdistan includes those areas in which the Kurds constitute some proportion of the total population. Clearly, a number of alternative paths exist within this population method. The most extreme would be to include in Kurdistan only those areas where Kurds constitute 100 percent of the population. Such a spatial definition would be extremely limiting and result in a highly fragmented Kurdistan, given that areas dominated by Kurds include small but far from negligible populations of, for example, Arabs, Jews, and Turkomen. It would also be a rather harsh standard to employ, for as we have seen in Chapter One only very rarely, if ever, do even states incorporate only one *ethnie* or nation.

²

The only Kurdish province with official sanction is the 'Kordestan' administrative region in Iran, based around the city of Sanandaj.

At the other extreme one could go so far as to spatialise Kurdistan as all those areas where *any* Kurds live. This is a reasonable argument and could be appropriately achieved in contiguous Kurdistan. But this definition could also be interpreted so as to include the Kurdish dominated shantytowns around such obviously non-Kurdish cities as Ankara, Baghdad, Damascus, Istanbul³, and Tehran, hundreds of kilometres away from contiguous Kurdistan. Moreover, it could be further stretched to include Kurdish areas in the Lebanon and, absurdly, in such far-flung European cities as Bonn, Hamburg, and London⁴.

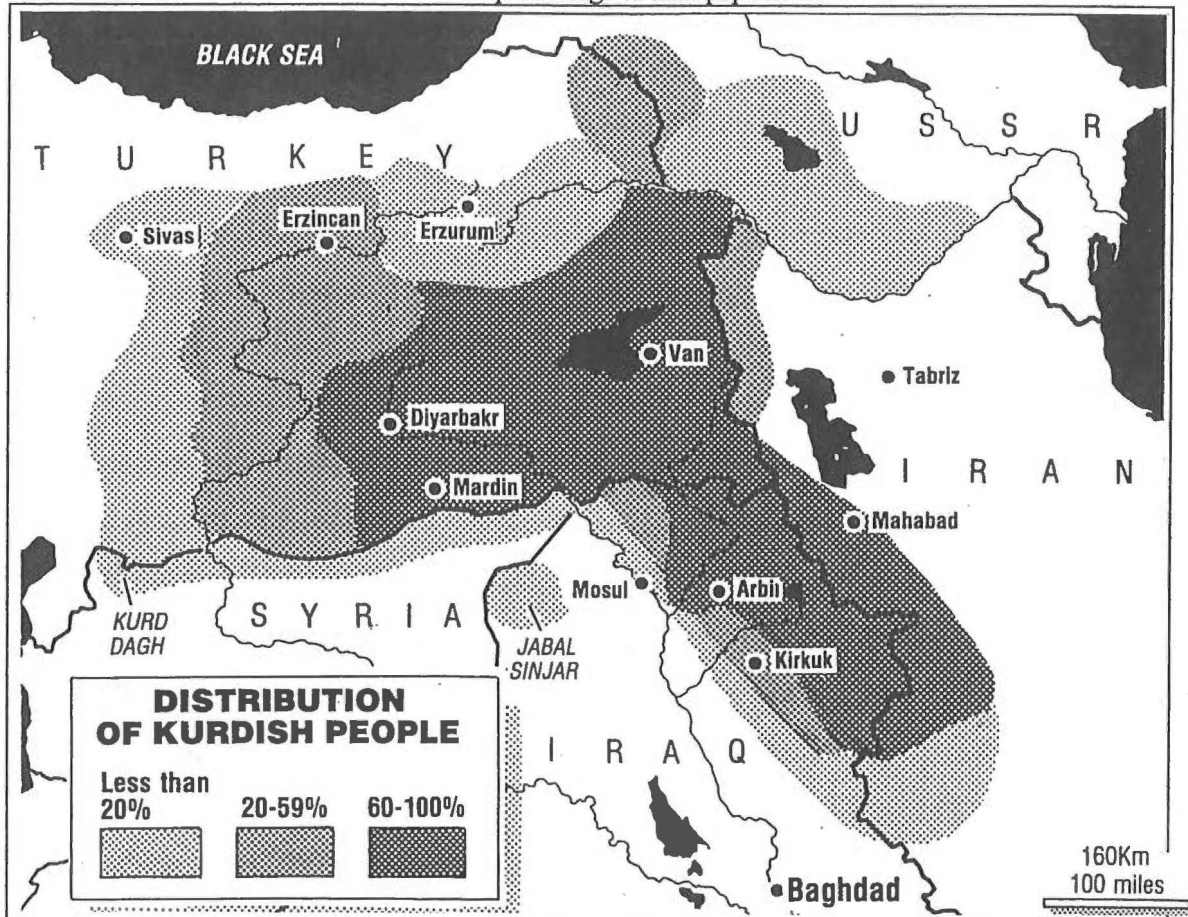
An appropriate compromise would therefore seem to be the 50 percent threshold. This lower limit would undoubtedly be a much fairer definition than the 100 percent criteria, but at the same time limiting the spatial expanse of Kurdistan to areas where the Kurds constitute a *majority* of the population. McDowall (1991: Between pages 25 - 26; 1996:xiv) offers two extremely useful choropleth maps (Maps 3:2 and 3:3) which can be used as guides in defining Kurdistan by this method. While this configuration is invaluable in representing the spatial, proportional distribution of Kurds, these maps are somewhat restricted by the rather broad categories. Moreover, the 50 percent threshold is not represented by a boundary line between these categories.

³ Kendal (1993b:39) estimates that in 1970, already a generation ago, there were half a million Kurds living and working in Istanbul, and another 1.5 million to 2 million in Turkey's other main industrial centres. These enclaves of Kurds, created by government policies of assimilation and the attraction of employment, further problematise mapping the Kurdish nation.

⁴ While this may seem like a rather incredulous suggestion, B. Anderson's (1983) idea of the nation as an imagined community gives it some credibility, for Kurds living and working in these cities not only send home remittances to support their families, but have organised themselves into political groups which pressure host governments and generally serve to increase the profile of the Kurds' plight. As an example, in Hamburg earlier this year Kurdish groups sympathetic to the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) staged a number of demonstrations against the German government for supplying military equipment to Turkey, subsequently used by Ankara in its fight against the PKK (Usher 1996:25). The idea of Kurdish nationalism is not, therefore, confined to the place of Kurdistan, and a fluid interpretation of the spatiality of the nation opens up the possibility of including such places as part of the Kurdish nation.

Map 3:2 Kurdish population distribution (1991)

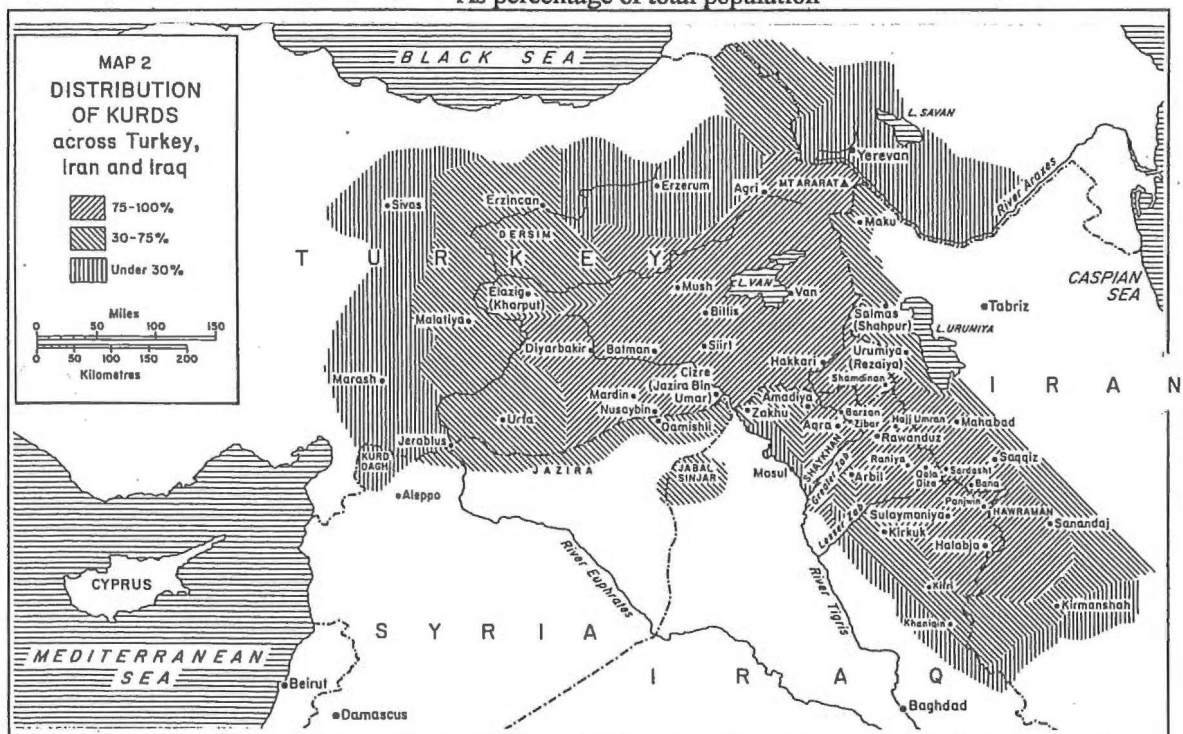
As percentage of total population



Source: McDowall 1991: Between pages 25 - 26.

Map 3:3 Kurdish population distribution (1996)

As percentage of total population



Source: McDowall 1996:xiv.

It is opportune at this point to discuss another major problem when deciding where Kurdistan is and where it is not. This problem flows from variations in the large volume of reference material which I have taken into consideration. Sources refer to specific places as being distinctly Kurdish which fall *outside* my 50 percent threshold interpretation of McDowall's population distribution maps (eg, Sivas and Marash in central Turkey). The cause of this problem is quite clearly the temporal variation in the literature (eg, from O'Ballance 1973 to McDowall 1996), which brings us to the second major obstacle in demarcating Kurdistan, the temporal variable. Research undertaken at different times, even using the same spatial basis of Kurdistan, will come up with disparate delineations of Kurdistan⁵.

After deciding on the 50 percent threshold as my definition of the spatial expanse of Kurdistan and much comparative reading, I have come up with Map 3:4 as *my* synthesised, demographic map of Kurdistan. This map is largely based on McDowall's work, but in places I have made modifications to account for divergences evident in the reference material. I must note that this Kurdistan is, in general, considerably smaller than maps of Kurdistan found in the reference material, a direct result of the 50 percent threshold rather than a lower standard⁶. While I believe this delineation of Kurdistan is reasonably accurate, I once again emphasise the difficulty in mapping the spatially problematic place that is Kurdistan.

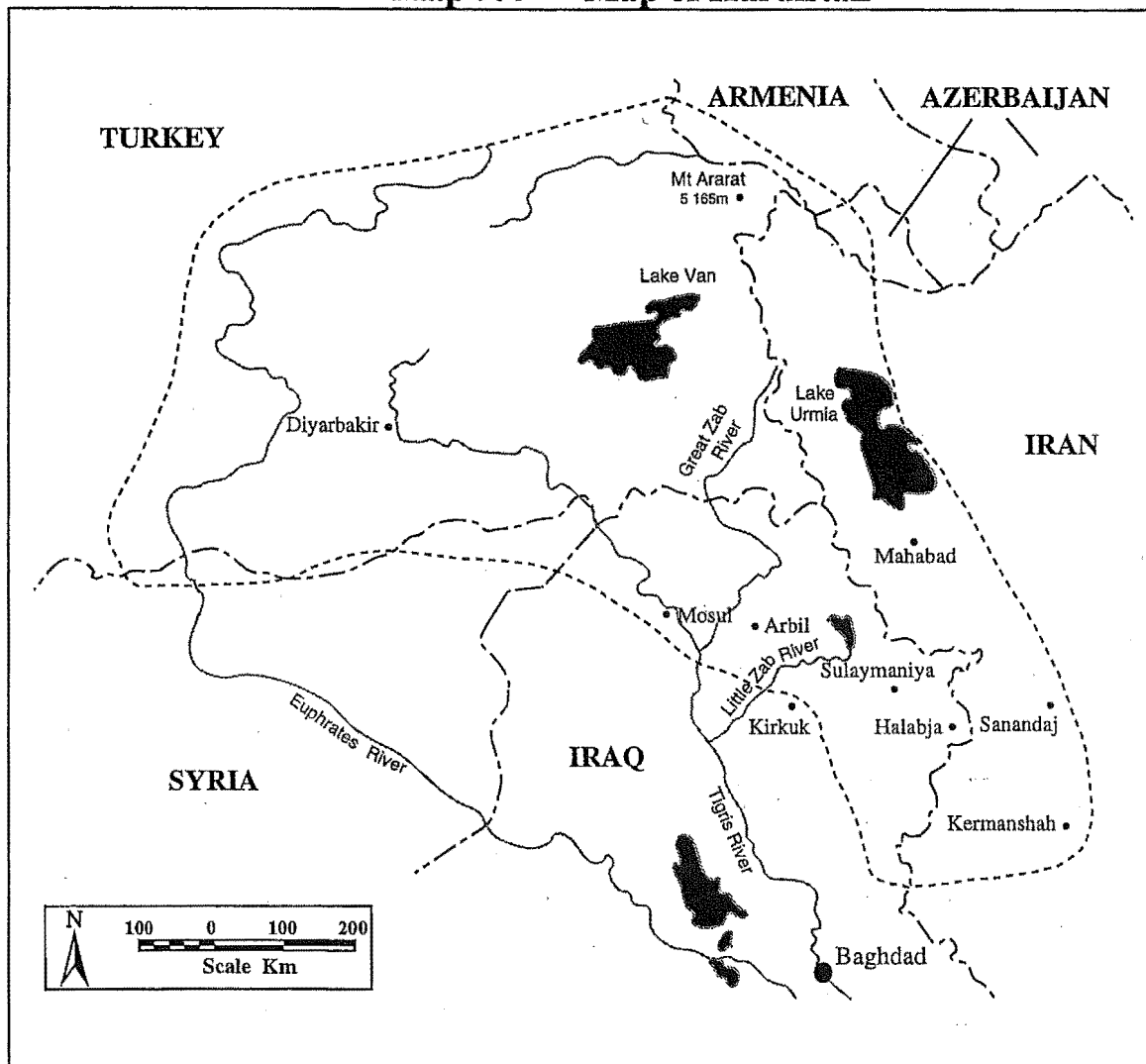
Any demographic map of Kurdistan, although based on objective criteria, is an inherently political statement, for the implication is that within Kurdistan's boundary - wherever this is drawn - the state governments have no control over the population and the entire territory is under Kurdish control. But the transition from government to Kurdish control does not occur in accordance with simple demographics. In the instance of Map 3:4, for example, the government may control areas with *more* than a 50 percent

⁵ For examples of just how spatially different maps of Kurdistan can be, see maps in Ahmad 1994; Anderson 1993; Bengio 1995; Bradshaw 1991; Buckley 1994; Bulloch and Morris 1992; Chaliand 1993; Entessar 1984; Evans 1991; Hassanpour 1992; Hellier 1989; Ignatieff 1993; JRO 1991; McDowall 1989, 1991, 1996; O'Ballance 1973, 1996; Pelletiere 1984; Short and McDermott 1981; Tear Fund 1996; *The Economist* 1987, 1988, 1989, 1991, 1992, 1994.

⁶ As an illustration some references, for example Bulloch and Morris (1992:4) and Tear Fund (1996:2), refer to Kurdistan as being approximately the same size as France, some 551 000 square kilometres. As will be seen later in this chapter, this figure is two-thirds bigger than my Kurdistan, a clear indication of the consequences of using the 50 percent population threshold.

proportion of Kurds, and the Kurds may control areas with *less* than a 50 percent proportion of Kurds; nevertheless the 50 percent threshold provides a balanced interpretation. This problem has a high temporal variation because of the ongoing political - military turmoil between the state governments of Iran, Iraq, and Turkey and the Kurdish nationalist organisations in each state.

Map 3:4 Map of Kurdistan

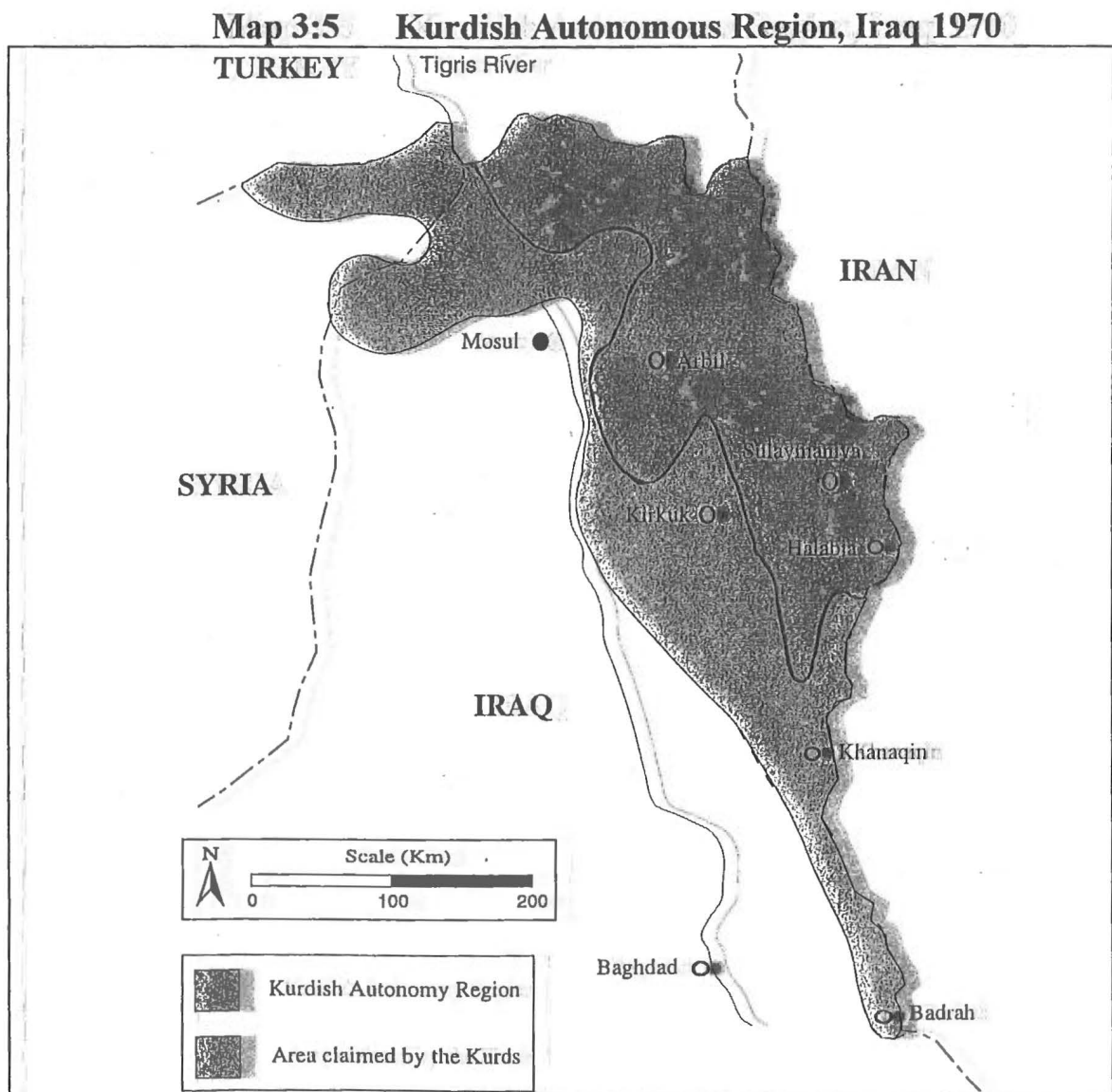


Source: Author.

In practical political terms, therefore, the spatial expanse of Kurdistan is a direct reflection of the military balance of power. When the Kurds are in a position of relative strength, Kurdistan expands. When one or more of the governments are in ascendance, Kurdistan shrinks. Thus the 'political' borders of Kurdistan essentially coincide with the military front line at any point in time, and this is reflected in temporally disparate texts referring to specific places as Kurdish controlled at one time and government controlled at another. Thus Kurdistan's borders, however defined, are positively liquid. I wish,

therefore, to make the same succinct disclaimer as McDowall (1991:8) does, namely because “no map of Kurdistan can be drawn without contention .the demographic map included (Map 3:4) is not a political statement (but is intended only as a) statement of where (the majority of the population are Kurds)”.

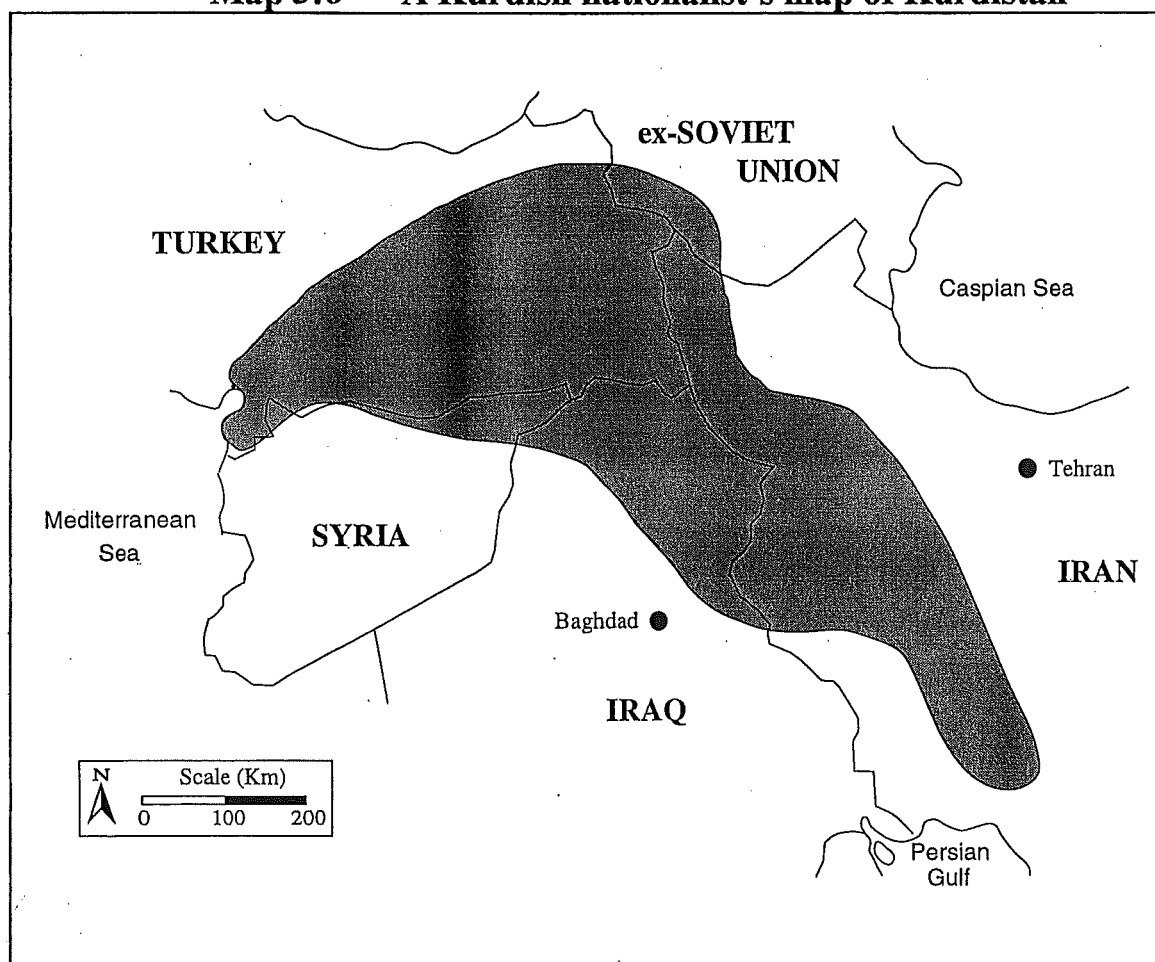
If maps of Kurdistan can be *interpreted* in political terms, then they can also be *constructed* as political propaganda. Thus there is a considerable divergence between the spatialisation of Kurdistan by the involved parties. Kurdish nationalist organisations and sympathisers are predisposed to expand Kurdistan. Conversely, the governments in Tehran, Baghdad, and Ankara portray Kurdistan as substantially smaller in size (McDowall 1989:5). An illustrative example of this spatial irony occurred during negotiations for a Kurdish Autonomy Region in Iraq in 1970 (Map 3:5).



Source: JRO 1991: Between pages 2 - 3.

In a similar vein JRO⁷ (1991: Between pages 2 - 3) presents a map which dramatically demonstrates the Kurdish inclination to exaggerate 'Kurdistan' (Map 3:6). For several reasons this is a rather ambitious map. It is wildly optimistic to suggest that 'Kurdistan' reaches the northeastern shores of the Mediterranean Sea⁸, as it is to claim territory to within 60km of the Persian Gulf. It is doubtful whether, at any stage and to any significant temporal duration and level of political control, 'Kurdistan' has penetrated to within 200km of Tehran and/or 80km of Baghdad. Furthermore, as a result of the rich oilfields around Kirkuk⁹, this locality is one of the most strongly contested places between Kurds and the Arab government.

Map 3:6 A Kurdish nationalist's map of Kurdistan



Source: JRO 1991: Between pages 2 - 3.

⁷ I would say what this acronym stands for, but JRO documents do not themselves indicate what it refers to, although it does appear to be some type of educational organisation.

⁸ McDowall (1991:8) notes that this claim is probably made so as to give a possible Kurdish state a convenient sea outlet .

⁹ In Chapter Six I shall demonstrate that Kirkuk has only once been in Kurdish hands, and then or just on a week, in March 1991.

Physical geography

Using Map 3:4's delineation, Kurdistan is approximately 330 000 square kilometres (km²) in area, a region slightly bigger than New Zealand¹⁰. Kurdistan's dominant topographic feature is the north end of the Zagros mountains, providing a very rough, alpine terrain. Most of the area exceeds 3 000 metres (m) in elevation. In the extreme east of Turkey, near the borders with Armenia and Iran, is Kurdistan's highest point, Mount Ararat, at 5 165m.

These mountains are of the utmost importance for the Kurds, for whom a long history of occupation has resulted in the formation of a strong psychological attachment. This bond is evident in the common Kurdish saying that "the Kurds have no friends but the mountains" (Bulloch and Morris 1992:2; Buckley 1994:1). Indeed, the Kurds and the mountains are essentially synonymous, a definite and distinctive Kurdish national homeland. The Zagros mountains and other smaller ranges, therefore, play a crucial part in the Kurds' 'geographical imagination'.

Because Kurdistan is landlocked its climate is mainly continental in character, so it is subject to a large variation between winter and summer temperatures. Cold winters are exacerbated because of Kurdistan's high altitude, and temperatures of around -10°C are not uncommon¹¹. In summer the hottest parts of Kurdistan reach the mid 40s. Kurdistan has two rainy seasons, one in March at the beginning of spring and the other in November at the end of autumn. The summer drought of June - August is longer and more extreme than the winter drought of January - February. The winter shortage of water is due to precipitation falling as snow and remaining frozen until the March thaw.

Precipitation levels are extremely variable. In southern Kurdistan, where the Mesopotamian Plain joins the foothills of the Zagros Mountains, rainfall is commonly between just 100 and 200 millimetres (mm) per year. Travelling north into the heart of Kurdistan, precipitation levels rise in relation to altitude. The biggest proportion of Kurdistan, between Lakes Van and Urmia, receives between 600 - 1 000mm annually.

¹⁰ The area of New Zealand is 268 812 square kilometres.

¹¹ This figure is a generalisation for Kurdish settlements. In higher altitudes but less inhabited areas this figure will be much lower.

The highest mountain peaks receive 1 000 - 1 500mm. The average annual rainfall for all of Kurdistan is around 600mm¹², only slightly drier than Christchurch at 660mm.

The high precipitation levels in the mountains of Kurdistan give rise to a large number of important rivers and lakes which, in a part of the world where water is a scarce resource (and increasingly so), gives Kurdistan considerable strategic importance. For example, the two most famous Middle Eastern rivers after the Nile, the Tigris and the Euphrates, both have their headwaters in Kurdistan in Turkey and flow into Iraq, the latter after first passing through Syria. Two other major rivers, the Great Zab and the Little Zab, are important tributaries of the Tigris River.

Kurdistan's extensive river system is estimated to have a hydroelectric power generating capacity of an astonishing 90 000 million kilowatts (Kendal 1993b:38). In recent years the Iraqi and Turkish governments have been especially active in exploiting this potential, and a number of dams have been built. This contemporary development is an indication of the growing importance of water in the Middle East, for as we shall see in a moment Kurdistan's resources are significantly underdeveloped because of the prevailing political and military situation. Kurdistan's supplies of this scarcest Middle Eastern resource are supplemented by the vast natural lakes of Lake Van and Lake Urmia. These are further added to by the increasing number of artificial lakes created by the new hydroelectric dams.

While Kurdistan's water resources are peculiar to this part of the world, Kurdistan is also endowed with substantial deposits of the resource that makes the Middle East in general such a vital area: Oil. Kurdistan's oilfields, concentrated around the cities of Mosul and Kirkuk¹³, constitute up to half of Iraq's oil reserves. But exclusive control of this most precious Middle Eastern resource has so far eluded the Kurds, although demands are frequently made for a considerable percentage of Iraq's oil revenues to be spent in Kurdistan¹⁴. Approximately half the length of two major oil

¹² I have estimated this figure from hydrological maps of the region.

¹³ Within the Kirkuk oilfields lie two sites of particular interest. First, at a place called Baba Gurgur lies the biblical fiery furnace into which Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were thrown (Daniel 3:20 - 24). Second, at Nuzi a small clay tablet was discovered which, dated at 2 500 BCE, contains the oldest known map: A significant site for geographers indeed.

¹⁴ In the negotiations for a Kurdish Autonomy Region in Iraq in 1970, for example, the Kurdish Democratic Party made this a fundamental demand.

pipelines, the 1 000 kilometre Baghdad to Dortyol (Turkey) and the 500 kilometre Batman (Turkey) to Dortyol, travel through Kurdistan.

The unstable political and military conditions that have plagued Kurdistan in modern times have prevented large scale exploration, let alone exploitation, of Kurdistan's other mineral resources. Although speculative, what research has been done suggests that there are substantial chrome, coal, copper, gold, iron, lignite, silver, and even uranium deposits in Kurdistan (Short and McDermott 1981:5; Vanly 1993:140). Because of the continued volatility of the area these seem unlikely to be exploited in the near future.

Within the many mountain valleys, and on the smaller and less frequent plains, fertile agricultural land has been put to good use, although substantial amounts of such land remains underutilised. At the northern edge of the Fertile Crescent, Kurdistan's main agricultural crops include barley, cotton, lentils, peas, rice, tobacco, and wheat. Various fruits are also grown. Sheep and goats are raised for meat and milk, while cattle are employed as work animals. Wild animals include bears, foxes, wolves, boars, and hyenas.

One resource which has been exploited, although too much so, is Kurdistan's hitherto vast cedar and oak forests. With the development of modern energy sources being a relatively recent phenomenon (not to mention government controlled) the Kurds have had to rely almost exclusively on these forests for fuel and building materials. As a consequence of this reliance this resource has been seriously depleted (Kendal 1993b:38; Buckley 1994:1).

Cities and towns

The *de facto* capital of Kurdistan is the city of Arbil (see Map 3:4), located in the centre of a rectangle formed by the Great Zab, Little Zab, and Tigris Rivers. A city that has existed since c.2200 BCE, Arbil is also said to be the ancient stronghold of the man commonly referred to as the greatest Kurd that ever lived, and certainly a crucial icon in Kurdish history: Saladin. This powerful Muslim leader defeated Richard the Lionheart in the Crusades of the twelfth century CE. Although he fought first and foremost as a

Muslim and was not a Kurdish nationalist, modern Kurdish nationalism regards him as such. Saladin was born in a village called Tikrit on the western bank of the Tigris River north of Baghdad. So too was Iraqi President Saddam Hussein: An interesting contradiction of place in Kurdistan in Iraq.

Other major cities in Kurdistan include Mahabad, Sanandaj, and Kermanshah in Iran; Mosul, Kirkuk, and Sulaymaniya in Iraq; and Diyarbakir, Bitlis, and Van in Turkey. Kermanshah and Sulaymaniya are the largest cities in Kurdistan, with populations around the one million mark (Buckley 1994:1). In describing the major cities and towns of Kurdistan we again see the contradiction that this place is. In what Kurds (and others) call Kurdistan, these sites still belong to other spaces, namely the state territories of Iran, Iraq, and Turkey.

In southeastern Kurdistan lies the now infamous town of Halabja, which on 16 March 1988 was the scene of only the second but largest chemical weapons attack since World War One¹⁵. Since then Halabja has been commonly referred to as the Kurdish Auschwitz, "not because the scale of the massacre was comparable with that of the Nazi death camp, but because the victims were chosen merely because they were Kurds" (Bulloch and Morris 1992:142). The chemical attack on Halabja tragically represents a contradiction of 'international' conflict: Far from being an attack on the territory of another state, this assault was carried out by Iraqi forces on an enemy located on Iraqi territory. Thus state security is not exclusively threatened *from* another space (that is, state), it can be, and is being, undermined from within.

People

Ethnic origins

The precise ethnic origins of the Kurds remain uncertain. But the most frequently offered explanations (eg, Anderson 1993; Chaliand 1993; Entessar 1984, 1989, 1992; MacDonald 1993; McDowall 1989, 1991, 1992, 1996; Pelletiere 1984) of their anthropological history traces Kurdish ancestry to a number of Indo-European tribes

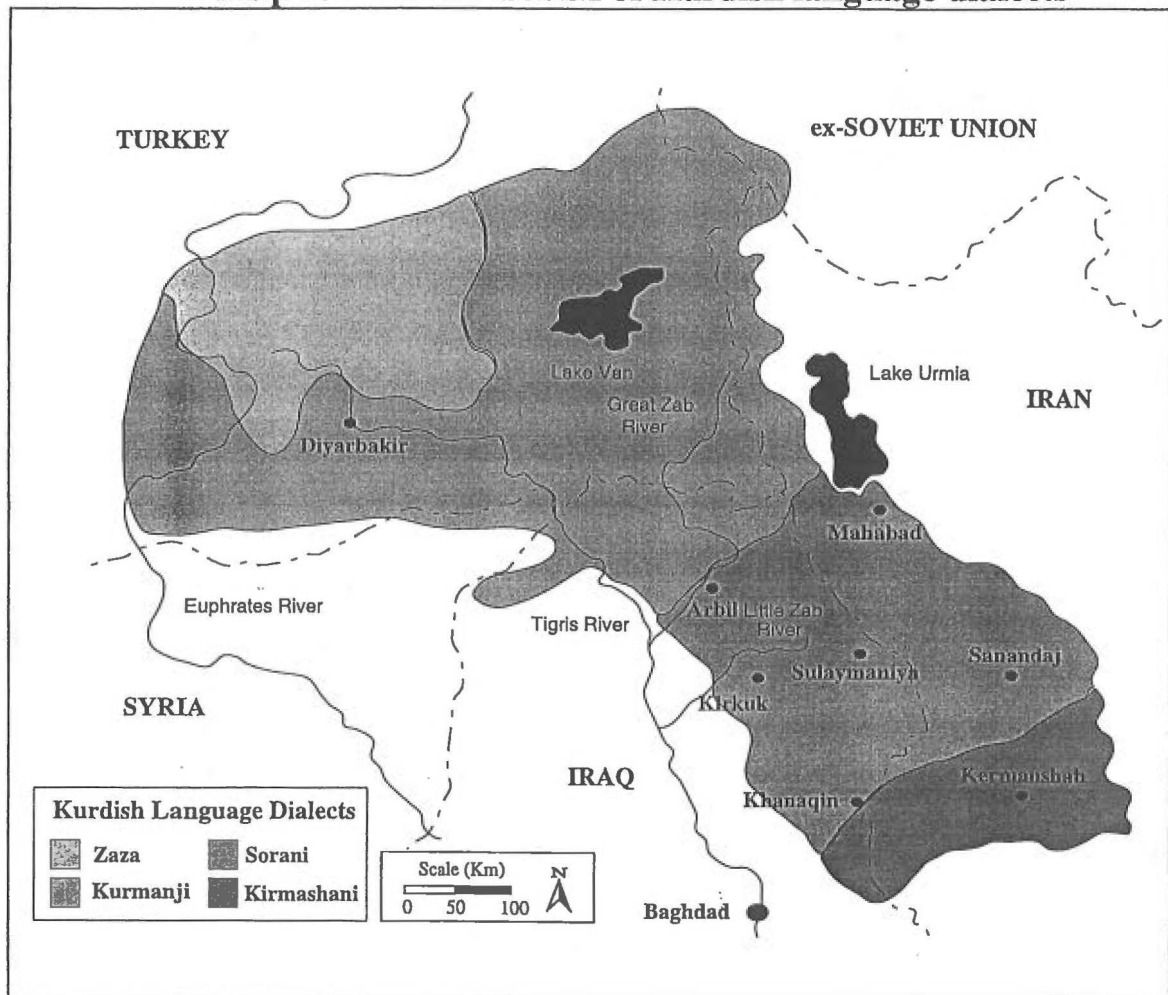
who migrated into the region of modern day Kurdistan approximately four thousand years ago. Kurds themselves believe they are descendent from a specific Indo-European tribe known as the Medes, who ruled this area for 1 500 years. Anthropological and historical evidence, however, does not support this perception of a pure Kurdish lineage. But it is important to recognise, as done in Chapter Two, that for nation(alism) pure ethnic origins are a matter of the heart and not of fact. In Connor's (1978:380; emphasis original) words, "what ultimately matters is not *what is* but *what people believe is*".

In 550 BCE, the Persians defeated the Medes in war and became the rulers of a greater Persia, and the Medes remained subordinate inhabitants of the mountainous regions of Persia's northwest. Over the next millennium the Medes intermingled with other tribes, although they maintained their ethnic distinctiveness *vis-à-vis* the Armenians, Azeris, Turks, and Persians. A major factor in resisting assimilation was their inhabitancy of the mountainous regions of Kurdistan. By the time the Arabs conquered the Persians in the seventh century CE, however, this miscegenation had become so extensive that the Arab word "*Kardu*", meaning 'nomad', was applied to all the people living in this mountainous region. It is from this Indo-European tribal melange that the modern day Kurds are descendent. Similarly, the noun 'Kurd' is derived from the Arab noun "*Kardu*", a rather ironic origin, and a point to be remembered in the following two chapters.

Language

Like their ethnicity the Kurdish language is of Indo-European heritage. The Kurdish language is divided into three main dialects, known as *Kurmanji*, *Sorani*, and *Zaza*. The first two are the major dialects in terms of the number of Kurds that use them. *Kurmanji* is spoken by the large majority of Kurds, almost exclusively those living in Turkey, but including contiguous populations in northern Iraq and northwestern Iran. *Sorani* is the dominant dialect of the Kurds of southeastern Kurdistan. *Zaza* is spoken by only a small minority of Kurds, located in the northwest of Kurdistan. A minor dialect, *Kirmashani*, is used in the extreme southeast of Kurdistan, mostly in Iran but also over the border in Iraq. Map 3:7 shows the distribution of these Kurdish dialects.

Map 3:7 Distribution of Kurdish language dialects



Source: Hassanpour 1992:22.

The three main dialects of *Kurmanji*, *Sorani*, and *Zaza* are mutually unintelligible, and this has consistently proved to be a major obstacle to the development of a unified Kurdish nationalist movement. The Kurds have been unable to develop a single, universal *lingua franca* to overcome this linguistic diversity. Entessar (1989:86) notes three major reasons for this persistent division: The rugged mountain terrain has impeded the communication between Kurdish tribes and clans; the absence of a strong central administration has allowed diverse languages to persist; and the emergence of the state system further fragmented the Kurds and resisted open communication between Kurds under the jurisdiction of different states. Only recently have efforts to remedy this divisive facet of Kurdish nation(alism) met with any measure of success. For example, the main dialect of *Kurmanji* dominates Kurdish literature and as such is the most revered Kurdish vernacular.

Religion

Prior to their conversion to Sunni Islam by the conquering Arabs in the seventh century CE, the Kurds practiced various forms of a wide variety of religions, including Ahl-I Haqq, Alevi, Nestorian and Assyrian Christianity, Judaism, Yazidism, and Zoroastrianism. Today, over 75 percent of Kurds are Sunni Muslims (McDowall 1996:10), adherents of either the *Qadiriya* or *Naqshbandiya* brotherhood within this branch of Islam. The remaining Kurds are either Alevis, an unorthodox form of Shi'a Islam practiced in the northwestern extremes of Kurdistan, or Ithna'asheri Muslims, a more conventional form of Shi'a Islam found among the Kurdish tribes in and around the southern Kurdistan cities of Kermanshah and Khanaqin. Small communities of Christians, Jews, Ahl-I Haqq, and Yazidis persist to the present day. Religious differences, especially between Sunni and Shi'a Kurds, have also proved inhibitive to a unified Kurdish nationalist movement, although like language these are less pronounced today than in the past.

Population - Problems and politics

It is worth spending some time discussing the contemporary population of the Kurds, because for a number of interrelated reasons this is a topic of enormous debate and controversy (Chaliand 1993a; Entessar 1992; Gunter 1988; Kreyenbroek and Sperl 1992; McDowall 1996; O'Ballance 1996; Pelletiere 1984). First, because the Kurds are fighting for autonomy and self-determination from Iran, Iraq, and Turkey, these three states have "a strong vested interest in downplaying their precise numbers" (Pelletiere 1984:15). Contrastingly, but for the very same reason, Kurdish nationalist organisations have a "strong vested interest" in *inflating* their numbers. Indeed, a 1986 Kurdish claim put their number at 26 million, a figure that Gunter (1988:390) describes as "overzealous". The irony here is obvious.

Second, because Kurdistan is not a state a 'national' census has not yet been carried out. Instead, the Kurds are 'included' in the censuses of the states in which they live. So state governments, already motivated to minimise Kurdish numbers, are in control of census statistics. Moreover, Kurds who participate in such censuses are often intimidated by the overt and very real threat of political oppression and social discrimination. Consequently they do not identify themselves as Kurds. This non-disclosure has been particularly common in Turkey, where there has historically been no

official recognition of the existence of a Kurdish minority¹⁶ (Gunter 1988:391; Buckley 1994:6). Kendal (1993b:39), who participated in Turkey's 1965 census, highlights this problem:

"A significant number of Kurds are still deeply marked by the brutalities of the past half-century of anti-Kurd repression and are very wary of declaring themselves as Kurds. When asked 'What is your mother tongue?' destitute slum-dwellers who knew not a word of Turkish would answer heavily: 'Better put Turkish, we don't want any trouble'".

A contradiction thus arises, whereby the Kurds claim they belong to the Kurdish *nation*, but governments claim they belong to the *state* in which they live.

Recent research has established a commonly agreed upon but still approximate Kurdish population figure of around 20 million (Evans 1991:37; McDowall 1992:32). The latest information available estimates the current Kurdish population to be 24 - 27 million (McDowall 1996:3), which makes them the fourth largest ethnic group in the Middle East, behind Arabs, Persians, and Turks (Short and McDermott 1981:4), and the largest stateless nation in the world (Anderson 1993:109; MacDonald 1993:124). Offering a specific estimation of the contemporary Kurdish population is as difficult as delineating Kurdistan's boundaries. However, after much comparative reading I propose the contemporary Kurdish population to be 25 million, but this figure is certainly not beyond contention.

Partition

The Kurdish nation in six states: An overview

From Maps 3:2, 3:3, 3:4, 3:6, and 3:7 it can be seen that Kurdistan's 330 000km² is divided among six states, namely Armenia, Azerbaijan, Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Turkey. So too are the vast majority of the 25 million Kurds, although not all of them live within

¹⁶

This contrasts with Iran and Iraq, where there is some degree of legal recognition of the Kurds, although this is invariably ignored by these two state governments.

the 'Kurdistan' of each state¹⁷. Tables 3:1 and 3:2 provide data on the division of Kurdistan and the Kurds into these six states.

Table 3:1 The division of Kurdistan

State	Total State Area (km2)	Kurdistan Area (km2)	Percentage State Area	Percentage Kurdistan Area
Armenia	29 800	2 500	8.39	0.76
Azerbaijan	86 600	2 500	2.89	0.76
Iran	1 648 000	72 000	4.37	17.58
Iraq	434 925	58 000	13.34	21.82
Syria	185 180	5 000	2.70	1.52
Turkey	779 452	190 000	24.38	57.56
Total	3 163 957	330 000	10.43	100

Source: Author.

Table 3:2 The division of the Kurds

State	Total State Population (m)	Kurdistan Population (m)	Percentage State Popn	Percentage Kurdish Popn
Armenia	3.4	0.2	5.9	0.8
Azerbaijan	7.3	0.2	2.7	0.8
Iran	58.9	5.6	9.5	22.4
Iraq	18.4	4.2	22.8	16.8
Syria	13.8	1.0	7.3	4
Turkey	59.2	13.0	22	52
Lebanon	2.7	0.06	2.2	0.2
Europe	n/a	0.74	n/a	3
Total	161*	25	15.53*	100

n/a indicates figures not available.

*These totals are calculated excluding the data for Lebanon and Europe.

Source: Author.

Tables 3:1 and 3:2 demonstrate the territorial and population dominance of Kurdistan and the Kurds in Iran, Iraq, and especially Turkey, with these three states collectively incorporating nearly 97 percent of Kurdistan and accounting for over 90 percent of all Kurds. These statistics help to explain why Kurdish nation(alism) is so

¹⁷

As noted above, there are considerable Kurdish populations in western Turkey, as well as in central Iraq and eastern Iran. Given the difficulties in estimating the Kurdish population as a whole, it is impossible to tell solely from the resource material at my disposal what proportion of Kurds live within Kurdistan as opposed to those living in other parts of these six states, and in particular of Iran, Iraq, and Turkey.

strong in Iran, Iraq, and Turkey and, conversely, so weak in Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Syria. As a consequence, the Kurds in the former trio of states are the exclusive focus of this case study in general and more specifically in the following three subsections.

These three 'mini' regional geographies will commence by introducing the location and size of each state's Kurdistan, and also their Kurdish population. I will then outline the deep ethnic, linguistic, and religious chasms between the Kurds and the Persians in Iran, the Kurds and the Arabs in Iraq, and the Kurds and the Turks in Turkey. These cleavages are the very source of the bitter and protracted conflict that has existed for centuries but which found new expression with the establishment of these three states. In other words, it is these divisions that have led to the Kurdish ethnic versus Persian, Arab, and Turkish official international conflict.

The Kurdish nation in the state of Iran

Kurdistan in Iran¹⁸ occupies a north - south slither of territory in the state's extreme northwestern corner (Map 3:8). Approximately 72 000km² (Table 3:1), it is bounded to the north by the Iranian borders with Armenia and Azerbaijan, and its western boundary is delineated by the Iran - Turkey and Iran - Iraq borders. Kurdistan in Iran extends as far eastwards as to include Lake Urmia and stretches as far south as the city of Kermanshah. Iran is home to some 5.6 million Kurds (Table 3:2).

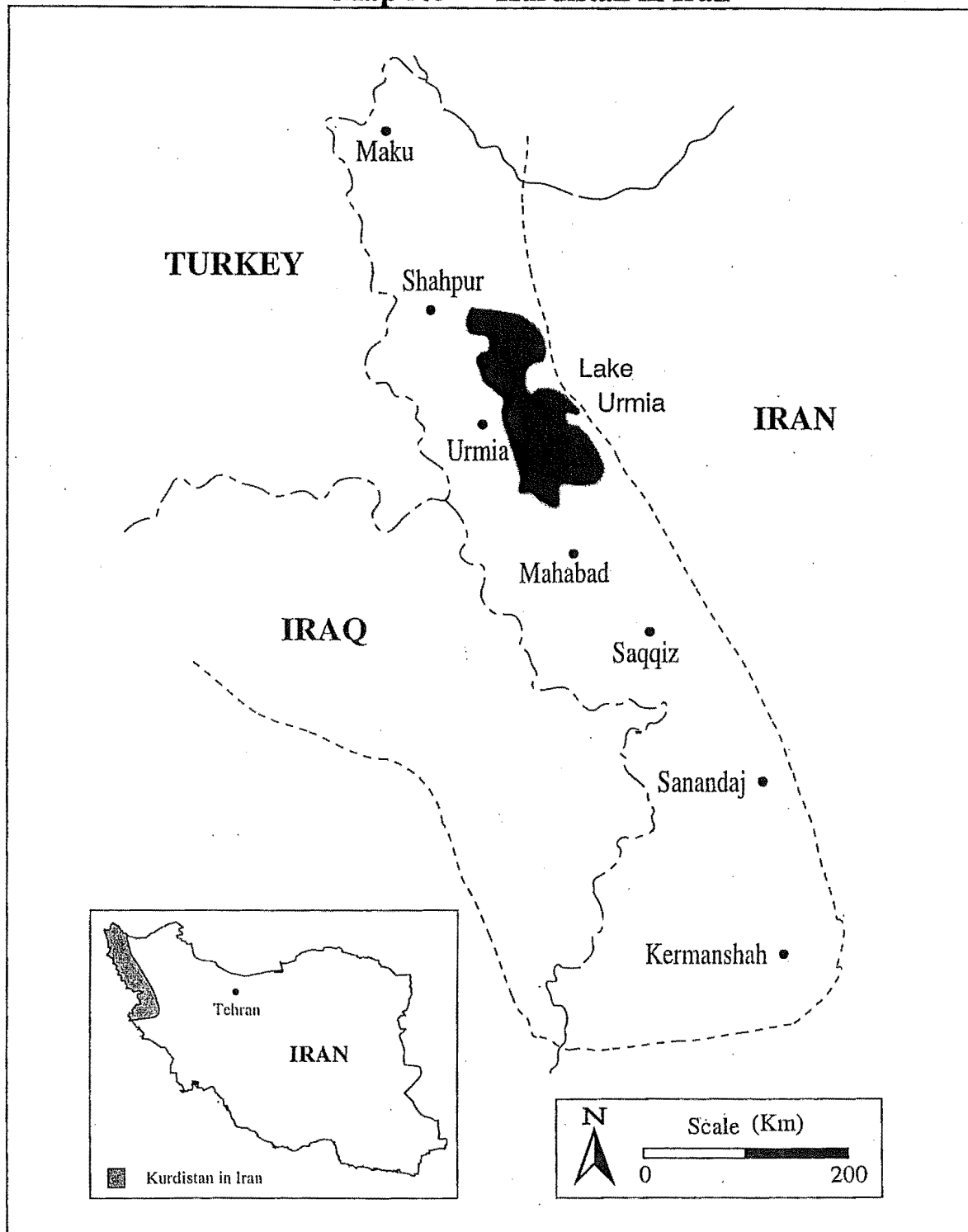
The Indo-European ancestry of the Kurds means that they are actually ethnically related to their Persian neighbours in Iran for both groups are, intriguingly, of Aryan descent¹⁹ (Pelletiere 1984:19; Entessar 1989:86). Ethnicity thus appears to be grounds

¹⁸ Throughout this chapter/thesis I will use the term 'Kurdistan in Iran/Iraq/Turkey' to refer to Kurdish territory in these three states, although in places this may 'sound' unusual, even grammatically incorrect. But I do so because it provides a Kurdish-centric description of these three 'state Kurdistans', and not a state-centric description like alternative terms such as 'Iranian/Iraqi/Turkish Kurdistan' would, because these imply that the area of Kurdistan within state boundaries belongs to that state, a geography that is most obviously refuted by Kurds. Because I am concerned with constructing an alternative map of global political space, to use terms such as these latter ones would clearly be a contradiction, even hypocritical. I therefore avoid such language.

¹⁹ I say intriguingly because of the infamy associated with the term Aryan following Nazi Germany's racial policies of 1933 - 1945, which served as the ethnic basis of The Final Solution of the Holocaust.

for mutual understanding and cooperation. But this possibility is far outweighed by religious and linguistic sources of conflict, the former being the most important.

Map 3:8 Kurdistan in Iran



Source: Author.

The Kurds and the Persians belong to two very different branches of Islam, the Sunni and Shi'a respectively. Ghassemlou (1993:96) has claimed that 98 percent of Kurds in Iran are Sunni Muslims. Although some Kurds in the south of Kurdistan in Iran

are Shi'a Muslims, these are certainly a minority and are relatively inactive politically. In contrast Crystal (1994:574) asserts that 93 percent of Persians are Shi'a Muslims, the official state religion of the Islamic Republic. Like their ethnicity the Kurdish language is of Indo-European origin (Tucker 1989:xv; Entessar 1992:4; Kreyenbroek 1992:70), and although also part of the Iranian family of languages, Kurdish and Farsi (the official language of Iran) are not mutually intelligible. The linguistic disparity between Kurdish and Farsi is therefore the second major contributor to the animosity between the two groups.

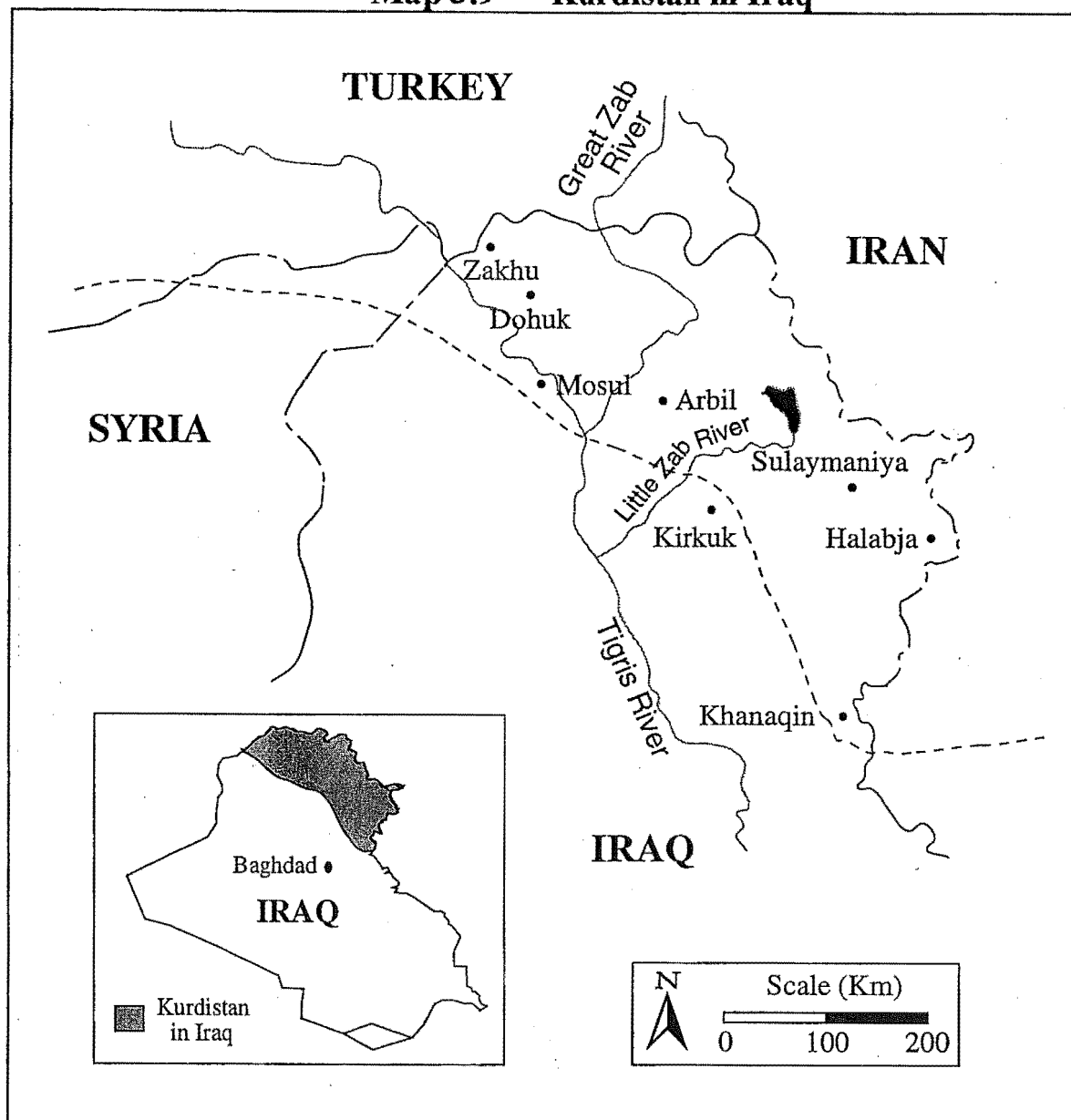
The Kurdish nation in the state of Iraq

Kurdistan in Iraq occupies a band of southeast - northwest territory running across the 'top end' of Iraq and parallel to the spine of the Zagros mountains (Map 3:9). Approximately 58 000 km² (Table 3:1), it is bounded in the west by Iraq's border with Syria, to the north by the border with Turkey, and to the east by the border with Iran. To the south Kurdistan in Iraq reaches the city of Khanaqin near the Iranian border. The Kurdish population in Iraq is 4.2 million (Table 3:2).

The ethnic and religious relationship between the Kurds and Iraq's Arabs is the exact mirror image of the situation in Iran. For the vast majority of Kurds and Iraqi Arabs are coreligionists of Sunni Islam, but they are of two very different ethnicities, Kurd and Arabic. The irony here is clear, as Pelletiere (1984:19; emphasis added) explains:

"In Iran....Kurds who might ordinarily live as equals with their *racial* brothers are alienated on the grounds of *religion*. And, ironically, in Iraq the situation is precisely the reverse. There the Kurds are *coreligionists* of the dominant Sunni Arabs, but as Kurds (that is, *non-Arabs*) they are considered aliens".

In addition to this ethnic hatred - a common Arab saying is that "Allah sent three plagues: The rat, the locust, and the Kurd" (O'Ballance 1996:viii) - Kurds and Arabs speak mutually unintelligible languages. This ethnic and linguistic disparity are the root sources of their common enmity.

Map 3:9 Kurdistan in Iraq

Source: Author.

The Kurdish nation in the state of Turkey

Kurdistan in Turkey is by far the largest of all three 'state Kurdistans', occupying the state's southeastern corner (Map 3:10). Approximately 190 000 km² (Table 3:1), it is bounded to the east and south by Turkey's borders with Armenia, Iran, Iraq, and Syria. To the west and north Turkish Kurdistan ends where the Kurds no longer constitute the ethnic majority. Kurdistan in Turkey includes Kurdistan's second major lake, Lake Van, and the headwaters of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. Turkey has the largest Kurdish population of these three states, with 13 million Kurdish inhabitants (Table 3:2).

Map 3:10 Kurdistan in Turkey

Source: Author.

In both Iran (ethnicity) and Iraq (religion) the Kurds have one of the three defining ethnic and cultural traits in common with the Persians and Arabs. In Turkey there is no such corresponding identity: The Kurds and the Turks are ethnically, linguistically, and religiously distinct from each other. Thus in the state with the largest Kurdistan territory and the largest Kurdish population, there is the greatest number of conflict axes between the Kurdish ethnic and state official nations. Despite the ethnic distinction official Turkish policy maintains that Kurds and Turks are of the same ethnicity. The Kurdish and Turkish languages are also of great diversity, but this is also overlooked by Turkish government policy, which attempts to enforce the Turkish language. The supposed ethnic homogeneity between Kurds and Turks has resulted in the social, political, and legal practice of referring to Kurds as simply "Mountain Turks

who have forgotten their language” (Atarodi 1991:283; Bulloch and Morris 1992:168). Finally, Turkey’s secular Islam is very different from the Sunni Islam predominantly practiced by the state’s Kurds.

These brief regional geographies have illustrated the Kurds’ geographic and political position in relation to the dominant ethnic groups of Iran, Iraq, and Turkey. By summarising the ethnic, linguistic, and religious similarities and differences between the Kurds and the Persians, Arabs, and Turks I have also highlighted the sources of this Kurdish ethnic versus state official international conflict. Table 3:3 gives a diagrammatical representation of these sources of conflict.

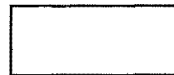
Table 3:3 Sources of international conflict in Iran, Iraq, and Turkey

State	Ethnicity		Religion		Language	
	State	Kurdish	State	Kurdish	State	Kurdish
Iran	Persian/ Aryan	Kurdish/ Aryan	Shi'a Islam	Sunni Islam	Farsi	Kurdish
Iraq	Arabic	Kurdish/ Aryan	Sunni Islam	Sunni Islam	Arabic	Kurdish
Turkey	Turkic	Kurdish/ Aryan	Secular Islam	Sunni Islam	Turkic	Kurdish

Key:



Sources of ethnic
tension with Kurds



Sources of possible
ethnic harmony

Source: Author

Conclusion

By providing a thorough regional geography of Kurdistan this chapter has introduced at the local scale the Kurdish case study. This method has also proved successful in substantiating the three dimensional typology of the nation presented in Chapter Two by exploring the territory and resources of Kurdistan, the ethnicity and culture of the Kurds, and the overriding aspect of the Kurds historical geography. And it is that partition of the Kurds, as a nation, and Kurdistan, as their national homeland, into no less than six states that emphatically demonstrates the spatial divergence between nation and state. The bounding together by ‘international’ boundaries of ethnic, religious, and/or linguistic groups as distinct as the Kurds on the one hand and the Persians, Arabs,

and Turks on the other into the states of Iran, Iraq, and Turkey provides the sources of the *international* conflict in Kurdistan. Because this conflict, which is the specific focus of the next two chapters, directly involves the governments in Tehran, Baghdad, and Ankara the geopolitical scale of analysis is expanded from the local to the Middle Eastern.

Chapter Four

Nation(alism) and international conflict in Kurdistan, 1880 - 1996

“The Kurds are the fourth most numerous people in the Middle East. They constitute one of the largest nations in the world today to have been denied an independent state. Whatever the yardstick for national identity the Kurds measure up to it. Kurdish nationalist thinking can be summed up as follows: ‘The Kurds constitute a single nation which has occupied its present habitat for at least three thousand years. They have outlived the rise and fall of many imperial races: Assyrians, Persians, Greeks, Romans, Arabs, Mongols, and Turks. They have their own history, language, and culture. Their country has been unjustly partitioned. But they are the original owners, not strangers to be tolerated as minorities with limited concessions granted at the whim of usurpers’”.

Martin Short and Anthony McDermott in *The Kurds* (1981:4)

Introduction

In order to fulfil its two fundamental purposes this chapter increases the geopolitical scale of analysis from the local to the Middle Eastern. The first objective of this discussion is to trace the Kurds' transition from an *ethnie* into a nation, thus fulfilling the critical fourth dimension of the nation as proposed in Chapter Two, that of political community. There are undoubtedly numerous ways to chart this development, but the chosen method accords to the second objective of this chapter: To demonstrate the international conflict in Kurdistan from the late nineteenth century to the present. Thus the emergence of Kurdish nation(alism) is analysed through the lens of the international conflict. In moving towards and achieving these twin objectives this chapter illustrates that the concepts of nation and state are far from synonymous, and therefore that their conventional conflation in international relations is inappropriate, and also that the assumption that every state is a nation-state is indeed erroneous. Moreover, this discussion will also provide an emphatic example of an international conflict, thus highlighting an area of neglect in conflict research for this, as we shall see, is far more than just a 'civil war'. On the other hand, this chapter also gives a strong indication of the necessity for separating nation and state, of conceiving of ethnic and official nations, and indeed of international conflict argued for in Chapter Two.

The discussion is divided into three sections. The first concentrates on an initial period of Tribal nation(alism) from the late nineteenth century to the outbreak of World War Two in 1939. This phase was characterised by growing nationalist rebellion against increasing penetrations by central government, but also by inter-tribal rivalry that prevented a strong, unified Kurdish nationalist movement from evolving and pushing claims for national self-determination. This divisiveness cost the Kurds dearly, as they were unable to establish their own independent nation-state of Kurdistan.

The second phase, immediately after the Second World War, saw the establishment of modern Kurdish political parties. Party nation(alism) was able to transcend tribal allegiances to an unprecedented level, thus mobilising an increasing number of Kurds against the state governments in Tehran, Baghdad, and Ankara. Kurdish political parties were, however, beset with residual inter-tribal animosities that continued to circumvent a single, combined nationalist movement.

Despite this the third phase saw the emergence of a truly Popular nation(alism) that since the 1960s has sustained a virtually continuous state of all out war in Kurdistan in Iran, Iraq, and Turkey. Although there have been periods of quiet, these have been intermittent and certainly overwhelmed by the episodes of violence. This stage of Kurdish nation(alism) bring us to the present day.

Tribal nation(alism)

Traditional Kurdish society was centred upon a strong attachment to the tribe, typically an extended family group with a number of smaller sub-units occupying a single mountain valley (McDowall 1991). The tribe was headed by two types of leader, the *agha* and the *shaykh*. The *agha* was responsible for the economic organisation of the tribe, while the Sunni Muslim *shaykh* provided religious and political leadership. The two were not mutually exclusive: An *agha* could also be a *shaykh* and vice versa. It was the *shaykh* which was most revered, commanding the loyalty of their tribe, and importantly of the tribal warriors, or *peshmerga*, literally 'those who face death'. For centuries the Kurdish tribes were effectively isolated from one another, but contacts grew throughout the nineteenth century. So too did inter-tribal rivalries, however, animosities that often descended into open fighting and banditry as the tribes attempted to exert their influence over their neighbours. By the 1870s the *shaykhs* were proving to be willing and able mediators of inter-tribal conflict. The main reason behind their success was their expansive knowledge and strict application of Islamic law, which created the impression of impartiality. This perceived absence of bias had the important effect of enabling the more capable and powerful *shaykhs* to transcend tribal politics, thus raising the prospect of pan-tribal unity. So for the first time in Kurdish history the *shaykhs* attempted to bring the hitherto disparate tribes together. It is in the late nineteenth century, therefore, that the Kurds began the transition from *ethnie* to nation.

Shaykh Ubayd Allah: The first nationalist

Undoubtedly the most important *shaykh* was Shaykh Ubayd Allah¹ of the town of Nehri, near Hakkari. By the late 1870s he was held in the utmost esteem by *shaykhs* and citizens alike. Olson (1989:3) notes that "some of the greatest tribal chieftains of the time

¹ Also spelt 'Obeydollah' or 'Ubaydallah'.

addressed Shaykh Ubayd Allah as ‘Your Highness’”. This popularity was in itself not unique: What made Shaykh Ubayd Allah different was his unprecedented assertion of the existence of a Kurdish *nation* and his consequent attempts to unite all the Kurdish tribes and establish an independent state of Kurdistan. Ubayd Allah explained his claim of Kurdish nationhood and their right to self-determination in an often quoted (eg, Olson 1989:2; Entessar 1992:82; McDowall 1989:10, 1991:14, 1996:53) letter of 1878 to British political officers² in the region:

“The Kurdish nation....is a people apart. Their religion is different (from that of others), and their laws and customs are distinct....The Chiefs and Rulers of Kurdistan, whether Turkish or Persian subjects, and the inhabitants of Kurdistan, one and all are united and agreed that matters cannot be carried on in this way with the (Ottoman and Qajar) Governments, and that necessarily something must be done, so that European Governments having understood the matter, shall inquire into our state. We also are a nation apart. We want our affairs to be in our own hands. Otherwise the whole of Kurdistan will take the matter into their own hands, as they are unable to put up with these continued evil deeds, and the oppression which they suffer at the hands of the two governments of impure intentions”.

In 1880 Shaykh Ubayd Allah carried out his threat, he and his followers mounting a rebellion that established an autonomous principality amidst the Ottoman Empire. Shaykh Ubayd Allah declared that his rebellion was undertaken in the name of the Kurdish nation, and not by individual tribes.

The Shaykh Ubayd Allah rebellion was, however, quickly quashed by the combined forces of the Ottoman and Persian Empires. Captured and incarcerated in Constantinople, Shaykh Ubayd Allah escaped, returned to Nehri, was recaptured, exiled to Mecca, where he died in 1883. The rebellion, however, lives on in Kurdish national conscience. Shaykh Ubayd Allah is regarded as the first leader to try to unify the disjointed Kurdish tribes, to gain complete political independence from Middle Eastern powers, and to establish a sovereign Kurdish national homeland. For all these reasons he remains for many Kurds “the first great Kurdish nationalist” (McDowall 1996:53).

² There is some confusion in the literature as to who exactly Shaykh Ubayd Allah wrote this letter. For example, McDowall (1996:53) claims that it was sent to William Abbott, the British Consul - General in Tabriz (Iran), while Olson (1989:2) suggests that it was delivered to British Vice - Consul Clayton in Baskale (Turkey). It seems plausible that, given the importance of this proclamation, both, if not more, British diplomats received this communique.

After Shaykh Ubayd Allah's failed rebellion similar but less significant uprisings suffered the same fate. It was not until the outbreak of World War One in 1914 that the geopolitical situation in the Middle East began to be transformed into a more favourable environment for the Kurds. Indeed, the complete disintegration of the Ottoman Empire by wars' end in 1918 gave rise to the possibility of an independent Kurdish state. The post-war period, therefore, was a critical time for the Kurds, who made new assertions of nation(alism).

Simko and Said

At the end of World War One the Ottoman Empire was no more and the Persian Empire was at a very low financial and organisational ebb. This power vacuum once again enabled the Kurds to establish tribally based autonomous enclaves. As in the pre-war period, the *shaykh* was most commonly the head of the tribe and, where confederations of tribes were established in the aftermath of the war, of these larger entities as well.

One such instance was the Shikak tribe of western Persia, around the southern and western edges of Lake Urmia. The Shikak are an important example, for in the summer of 1918 - actually before the end of the war, it should be noted - its leader, an *agha* by the name of Isma'il Simko, led a rebellion against Tehran.

As Simko's army inflicted a series of defeats on failing Qajar forces the rebellion gained considerable momentum, and at its peak numbered between eight and ten thousand (Entessar 1992:12). By the time the Armistice was signed in October 1918 Simko had established "an autonomous Kurdish government in the area west and south of Lake Urmia" (Koochi-Kamali 1992:175). Within this area Simko appointed Kurdish governors and published a journal called *Independent Kurdistan*. And on this note, crucially for our purposes, Simko called for the independence of Kurdistan under his own leadership (of course).

But Kurdish nation(alism) was still very much in an embryonic phase, and as a rural tribal leader Simko himself "had disdain for urban, settled, non-tribal folk....(suggesting) that his nationalism was defined more by socioeconomic status than by ethnicity" (McDowall 1996:221). And although Simko did head a large tribal confederation, the Shikak, and united a number of other tribes with him, Simko failed to

completely overcome pre-existing rivalries with neighbouring tribes. Remembering tribal animosities from yesteryear some of Simko's neighbours contested his claim to the Kurdish leadership and dissented from his chosen course for achieving and securing self-determination. Had Simko been able to gain the allegiance of surrounding tribes he would have expanded the territory under his control, increased the size of his army, and would thus have stood a better chance of achieving his nominally nationalist objectives. As it was, however, Simko's rebellion was defeated by Qajar government troops in February 1920, and Simko fled to the high mountains.

Despite this rout Simko almost immediately began to reorganise his forces and to acquire the support of his former colleagues. Rearmed by the Turks in Van, and fighting under a Turkish flag (how ironic!), Simko's forces, numbering about 2 000, began to reassert their control in the areas west and south of Lake Urmia. By the end of 1921 Simko's army was 5 000 strong. Tribes actively opposed to Simko and internal disagreements amongst tribal groupings who stood beside Simko, however, proved fatal to his second rebellion. In February 1921 the Qajar government in Tehran was overthrown by General Mohammed Reza Khan, who immediately began reorganising and modernising the Persian army. Eighteen months later Reza Khan defeated Simko's unsupported army, and on 16 August 1922 Simko fled to Turkey. When Simko next returned to Persia, in 1929, lured by Reza Khan - by then the first Shah of the Pahlavi Dynasty - he was killed in an ambush by government forces. Simko's demise was a serious blow to Kurdish hopes for their own state.

At the time of Simko's second defeat another important post-war Middle Eastern figure was staging his ascent to political stardom, a former Ottoman Army General named Mustafa Kemal. In the wake of the Ottoman Empire's disintegration, Mustafa Kemal set about establishing a Turkish national homeland. His incredible organisational and leadership skills saw a reconstituted Turkish army assert its control over some of the former Ottoman territories, including areas occupied by the Kurds. Moreover, in pursuit of a Turkish Republic Mustafa Kemal set about the abolition of the Caliph as well as the *sharia* courts of Islamic law.

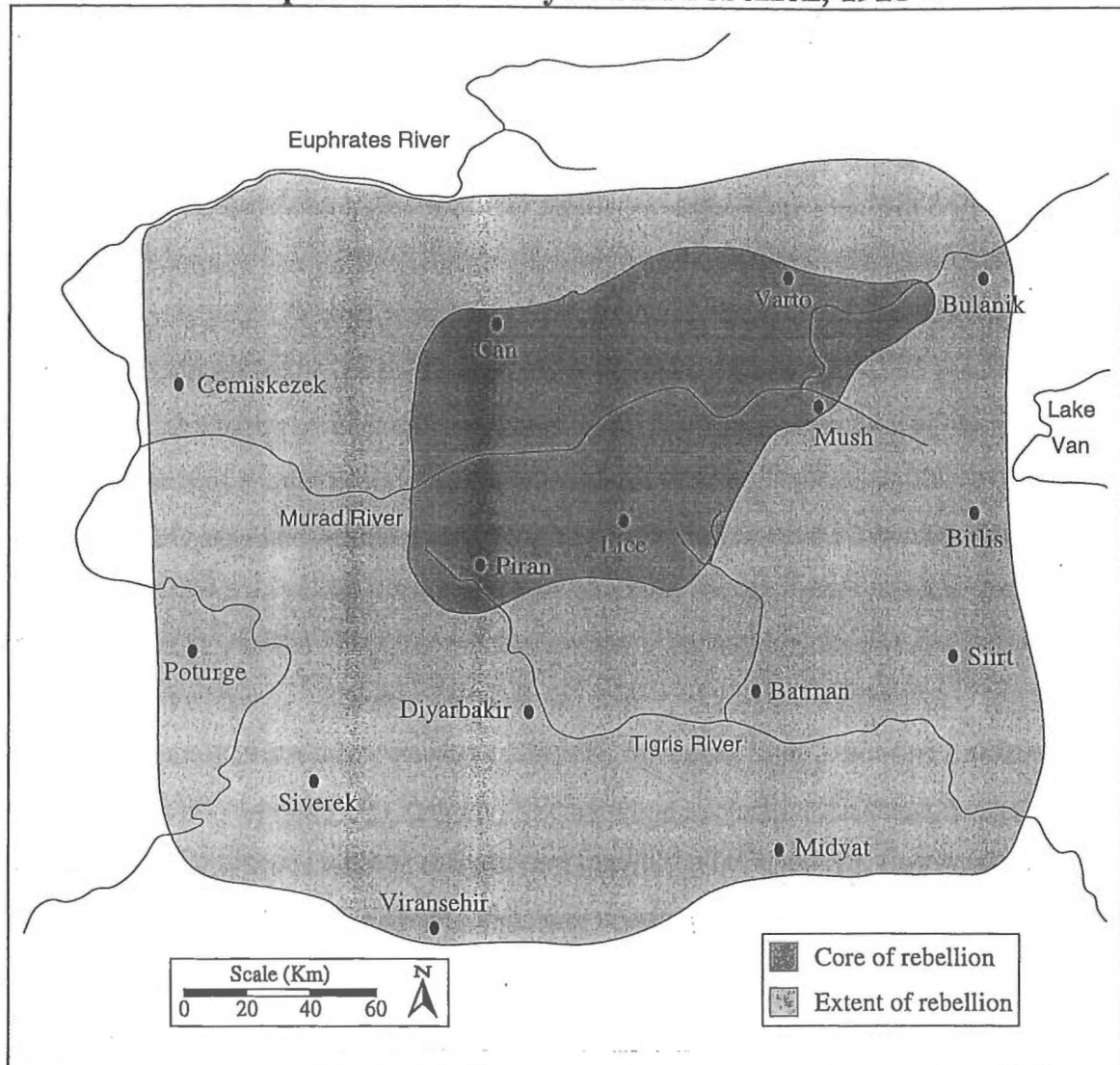
Turkish sovereignty, and secular sovereignty at that, was anathema to the Kurds of what was to become, in 1923, the modern day Republic of Turkey. This prospect was

especially abhorrent to one Shaykh Said, leader of the Azadi tribe, whose stronghold was approximately 150 kilometres west of Lake Van. The religious aspect was particularly important. When Mustafa Kemal finally abolished the Caliph on 3 March 1924 and the *sharia* courts on 8 April, Azadi preparations for rebellion intensified. During the summer Shaykh Said toured the *Zaza* speaking areas where he was most popular, gaining support among tribes neighbouring the Azadi.

In February 1925 the rebellion began in the town of Piran. It was triggered not by Shaykh Said but by an unplanned clash between his forces and a posse of Turkish gendarmes in pursuit of a small band of Kurdish outlaws who had sought sanctuary with Shaykh Said. But Shaykh Said's hand had been forced, and the rebellion was underway. Over the next month Azadi *peshmergas* and their cohorts, some 15 000 of them (Entessar 1992:83), seized a number of towns spread over some 65 000km² (Map 4:1).

Trouble, however, was brewing. In late February Mustafa Kemal's new Republican government dispatched a contingent of some 35 000 troops. Within a few short weeks the rebels had been halted, forced into retreat, and then surrounded. By mid April 30 leaders of the rebellion had been executed. Shaykh Said and his entourage temporarily evaded capture until late April, when they were handed over to the Turks by a chief of a neighbouring Kurdish tribe which had opposed the rebellion. Shaykh Said was subsequently hanged, along with 46 others, in Diyarbakir on 4 September 1925 (McDowall 1996:196).

The betrayal of Shaykh Said symbolised the failure he shared with Isma'il Simko in Persia: Both were unable to convince surrounding tribes to support their rebellion. In Shaykh Said's case the non-participation of two tribal groupings, the Alevi and the Sernak, proved critical. The Alevi did not join Shaykh Said for his was an overtly Sunni Islamic rebellion whereas, as noted in Chapter Three, the Alevi religion is a form of Shi'a Islam. The Sernak tribes remained neutral for two reasons, firstly because their chiefs had accepted gratuity and offers of government posts from the Turks, and secondly because they lived in a prosperous part of the region and simply preferred "the security of peace to the ravages of war" (Olson 1989:96).

Map 4:1 The Shaykh Said rebellion, 1925

Source: Olson 1989:97.

The Kemal government exacted an horrific revenge on the Kurds for the Shaykh Said rebellion. Scores of his supporters were hanged. Hundreds of villages and towns were ransacked before being burnt to the ground. The hundreds of thousands rendered homeless by such actions were deported *en masse* to other parts of Turkey to facilitate the 'Turkicisation' of Kurdistan in Turkey. Kurdish propaganda and Turkish cover-up make any estimation of casualties difficult and tentative, but McDowall (1996:200) suggests that between 1925 and 1928 15 000 Kurds were massacred, over half a million evicted, of which a further 200 000 subsequently perished. The *aghas* and *shaykhs* were particular targets for deportation or murder, and their lands and possessions were confiscated. Similar Kurdish uprisings throughout the 1920s and '30s in Kurdistan in Turkey brought only similar retribution. Turkey's then Minister of Justice epitomised the government's attitude when he asserted that "the Turk must be the only lord (and

master) of this country. Those who are not of pure Turkish stock can have only one right in this country, the right to be servants and slaves" (McDowall 1989:12).

Barzanji and Barzani

Similar rebellions with the same result were staged in southern Kurdistan. The first of these was undertaken by Shaykh Mahmoud Barzanji, an extremely powerful man because he was also an *agha*. Barzanji had served under the Ottomans as the Kurdish governor in Sulaymaniya, northeast of Baghdad. As mandate power after the war Britain not only retained but increased the area of Barzanji's jurisdiction, the use of indigenous authorities "an old British colonial habit....found to have advantages" (O'Ballance 1996:19). Expanding the size of Barzanji's domain, however, brought him into conflict with neighbouring tribal leaders, particularly those in Amadiya, Arbil, Barzan, Kirkuk, and Zakho, who rejected his authority. Barzanji was also perceived as a British puppet. The British realised their mistake and, when Barzanji questioned British authority in 1919, removed him into exile in India.

Barzanji's absence, however, was to be shortlived. For in 1922, when Mustafa Kemal's reinvigorated Turkish army crept ever closer to the Mosul *vilayet* (province), the British hurried Barzanji back to lead the Kurdish defence, with the proviso that he adhere strictly to British instruction. But Barzanji had other ideas, and upon his return he promptly entered into negotiations with the Turks, who easily inspired him into rebellion against the British and their Arab proxies in Baghdad. Although this uprising was small and rather impromptu, it was only suppressed after the Royal Air Force (RAF) bombed Barzanji's stronghold in Sulaymaniya.

Despite this attack Barzanji lived to fight another day, a day which came in 1931. The catalyst for this second Barzanji rebellion was the Anglo - Iraqi Treaty of 1930. Dismayed by the absence of provisions for Kurdish autonomy in this agreement and the inclusion of the Mosul *vilayet* into Iraq, Barzanji once again revolted and demanded a united and independent Kurdistan. His actions, however, also failed to gain the support of other tribes. When the RAF once again bombed his headquarters in Sulaymaniya in the spring of 1931, Barzanji's rollercoaster political career finally came to an end, with Barzanji accepting house arrest in southern Iraq.

The coming of complete Iraqi independence in 1932 under the rule of the Hashemite Arabs led by King Faisal inspired yet another Kurdish rebellion. After Baghdad attempted to collect taxes and establish a police presence in Kurdistan the Barzan tribe from the upper reaches of the Great Zab River, “an area of traditional lawlessness seldom touched by external authority” (O’Ballance 1996:20), rebelled under the leadership of Shaykh Ahmed Barzani. Like Barzanji before him, however, his uprising was quashed by Iraqi troops operating with RAF support, and he surrendered to Turkish forces in June 1932.

But his brother, Mulla Mustafa Barzani, who was both an *agha* and a *shaykh*, continued the fight for another twelve months. With only a small force of *peshmerga* remaining Mulla Mustafa surrendered in June 1933 when the RAF once again appeared; although this time they dropped amnesty leaflets, not bombs. Even though it was, from the outset, a uni-tribal uprising with little chance of success that stuttered to its inevitably anti-climactic end, the Barzani rebellion of 1932 - 33 did signal the start of the prestigious political career of Mulla Mustafa Barzani, who became “almost synonymous with Kurdish revolt....He was to prove, even forty years on, (that) no other Kurd could so rally rank and file Kurds as could he, to the chagrin of those Kurds who wished to do away with the old tribal order” (McDowall 1991:26).

The rebellions of Simko and Said, Barzanji and Barzani, demonstrate that, despite the enormous advances made, in particular but not only, by Shaykh Ubayd Allah in the late nineteenth century in establishing a pan-tribal nation(alism), Kurdish politics were still dominated by inter-tribal rivalries, distrust, and conflict. All four leaders, one an *agha*, one a *shaykh*, the other two both an *agha* and a *shaykh*, failed to completely transcend these divisions with surrounding tribes whose allegiance, when the moment of truth came, they most required. This lack of unity was undoubtedly the root cause of the eventual failure of these six and many other rebellions.

Party nation(alism)

The Kurdish Republic of Mahabad, Iran 1946

As was the case during the 1914 - 18 war, World War Two enabled many *aghās* and *shaykhs* to re-establish local autonomy. The potential for such action was greatest in what was a weak Iran. Reza Shah's government was perceived by the Allies as having pro-German tendencies, so in August 1941 the British and Soviet Armies 'invaded' Iran, forcing Reza Shah to abdicate. The Soviets occupied the north of the state while a British zone was established in the south. In between, the new government in Tehran, led by Reza Shah's son Mohammed Reza Shah, exercised a very limited sovereignty. It was, once again, in this power vacuum that the Kurds began to form their first broad based political parties.

One of the first of these new organisations was the Committee for the Resurrection of Kurdistan, or *Komala* (committee) for short. This party rose in opposition to the Soviet installation of many Kurds³, lacking in the necessary popular respect, as local authorities in place of departing representatives of the Tehran government. The *Komala* was formed in the city of Mahabad by some urban, middle class Kurds who were "familiar with the intellectual ferments of the time", many of them having been educated overseas, and whose specific objectives were to "further the cause of Kurdish self-determination" (Entessar 1992:16 - 17). Membership was contingent on Kurdish parentage, thus excluding, for example, Azeris and Kurds of mixed blood, even though communities of both groups lived and worked in Kurdish areas and spoke the Kurdish language. The *Komala* was, therefore, a nationalist organisation defined on ethnicity, in significant contrast with Simko's socioeconomic nation(alism) of the 1920s.

For various reasons the *Komala* was unable to extend its appeal into other parts of Kurdistan in Iran. Perhaps most importantly the *Komala* failed in this objective because of its internal dynamics, whereby the desire for collective decision making ruled out a hierarchical structure. A leaderless organisation was a completely foreign concept to most Kurds, familiar with the dominance of their tribal *amirs*, *shaykhs*, and *aghās*. Severely hamstrung by this omission, the *Komala* eventually appointed, in October 1944, Mahabad's leading citizen, Qazi Mohammed, as its spiritual leader.

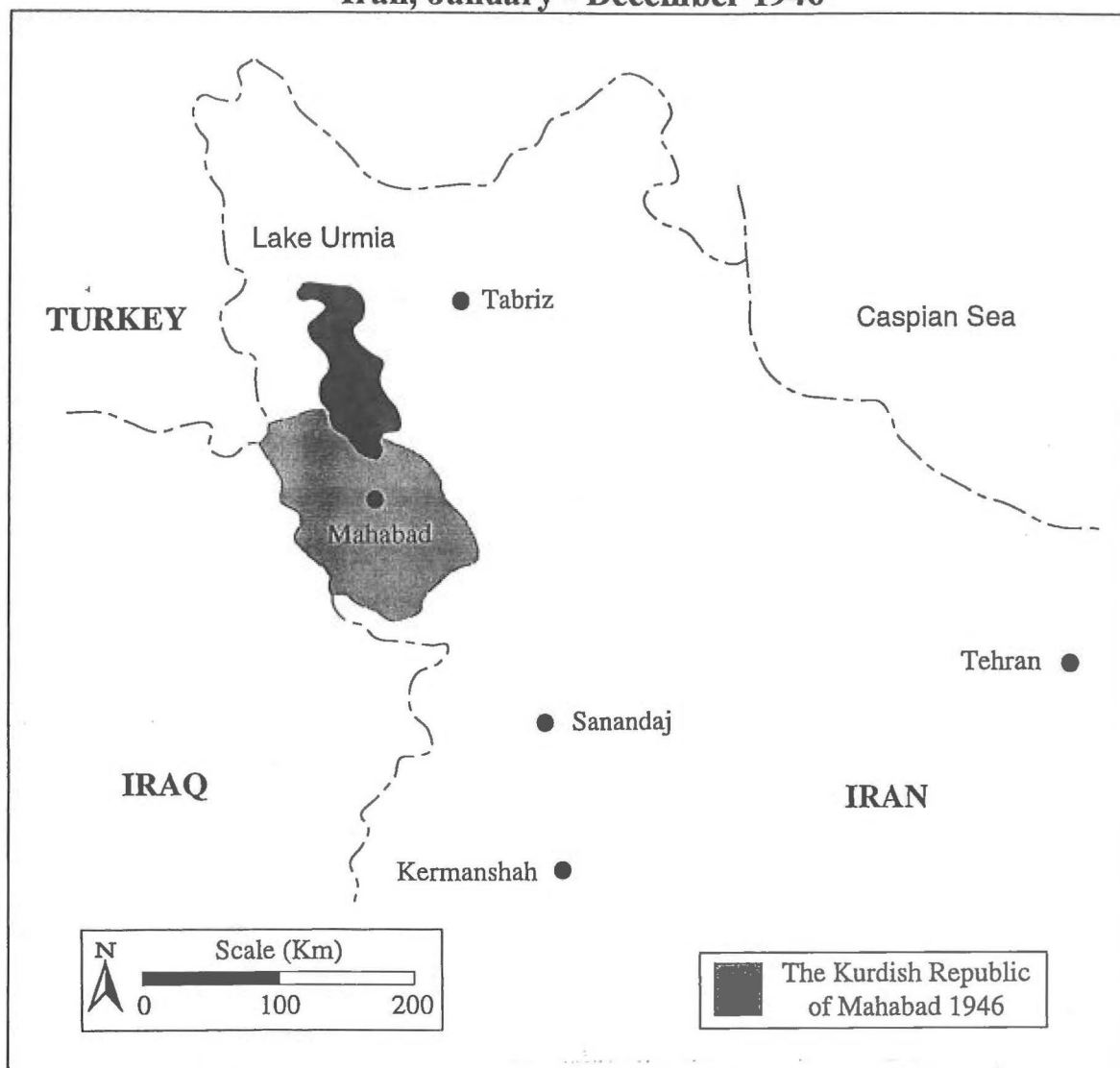
³ The role of the Soviet Union in the rise and fall of the Kurdish Republic of Mahabad will be analysed in detail in Chapter Five.

There was a growing recognition, however, that for the *Komala* to be able to assert its autonomy demands it required an effective military arm, not of Kurdish *peshmergas* standing alone but with external backing. The Soviet Union was the obvious choice given its occupation of northern Iran. Moscow was happy, indeed enthusiastic, to lend support, but demanded that the *Komala* would have to reform itself. The Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran (KDPI) was consequently formed in September 1945. The KDPI's manifesto included the following key points:

- (1) The Kurdish people in Iran must manage their own local affairs and be granted autonomy within Iran's borders;
 - (2) The Kurdish people must be allowed to study in their mother tongue. The official administrative language in the Kurdish territories must be Kurdish;
 - (3) Iran's constitution should guarantee that district councillors for Kurdistan be elected to take charge of all social and administrative matters;
 - (4) State officials must be chosen from the local Kurdish population;
 - (5) The KDPI is committed to progress in agriculture and trade; to developing education and sanitation; to furthering the spiritual and material well-being of the Kurdish people; and to the best use of the natural resources of Kurdistan; and
 - (6) The KDPI demands freedom of political action for all the people of Iran so that the whole country may rejoice in progress.
- (Quoted in Ghassemlou 1993:106)

After seizing control of Mahabad and the surrounding towns and countryside, the KDPI declared an autonomous Kurdish Republic on 22 January 1946 (Map 4:2). Qazi Mohammed was elected President. The expanse of the Republic largely coincided with the territory controlled by Isma'il Simko on two occasions during the late 1910s and early 1920s. Within this area the KDPI immediately set about demonstrating that Mahabad was indeed an autonomous Republic. The KDPI government assigned portfolios to a new cabinet, including Qazi Mohammed's cousin, Saif Qazi, as Minister of War. Other indications of the KDPI's sovereignty included the Kurdish language becoming the exclusive tongue in schools and in the now flourishing Kurdish newspapers, journals, and books. Kurds took over all government administration positions. Qazi Mohammed entered negotiations with Tehran, and demanded that "the Kurds need their own state now" (Entessar 1992:19).

**Map 4:2 The Kurdish Republic of Mahabad,
Iran, January - December 1946**



Source: Buckley 1994:8.

The KDPI also had what it thought was a strong military arm. Aside from its own forces drawn from the tribes surrounding Mahabad, the KDPI was boosted by the arrival of Mulla Mustafa Barzani and his *peshmergas* from Iraq. The KDPI was thus able to replace the Iranian police force previously responsible for law and order. Moreover, although Moscow had been careful not to officially commit to the actual military defence of the Republic, the presence of the Soviet Army to the north was enough of a deterrent to prevent Mohammed Reza Shah from moving against the rebellious Kurds.

But in May 1946 the Soviets withdrew from Iranian territory, a move which signalled the beginning of the end for Mahabad. Like his father before him in the early 1920s, Mohammed Reza Shah was able to reorganise and re-equip the Iranian Army. At

the end of 1946 Tehran moved against the Republic, its forces proving too strong for the KDPI *peshmergas*. After only a brief scuffle Iranian troops entered the city itself on 17 December, by which time they were unopposed. Within twelve months of its formation the Kurdish Republic of Mahabad had collapsed.

The establishment of the Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran was, ironically, both the reason for the Mahabad Republic's success and its failure. In the first instance, because many of its leaders were foreign educated the KDPI elevated Kurdish nation(alism) to a new intellectual plane. This new basis of identity cut across tribal divisions in a more secular, political manner than, for example, Shaykh Said's religious nation(alism) of the mid 1920s. Such modern political organisation attracted the attention of other Kurds, hence the arrival of Mulla Mustafa Barzani, as well as the interest and support of the Soviet Union. For all these reasons the KDPI's Kurdish Republic of Mahabad enjoyed, albeit for only a short time, the highest level of political autonomy that any Kurdish rebellion had (and has) ever established. And as such the Republic provides and persists as a crucial reference point in contemporary Kurdish nation(alism).

But these were also the reasons for the KDPI's failure. For example, while the emerging Leftist and Marxist political doctrines represented the spirit of the times for the growing number of politically active, urban Kurdish intellectuals, they were nothing short of alien concepts to the still important *aghas* and tribes people, far beyond their intellectual capabilities. Mulla Mustafa Barzani and his *peshmergas* arrived from Iraq not fresh and ready to take on the Persians but weakened and demoralised after a failed rebellion against Baghdad. Furthermore, the withdrawal of the Soviet Army from northern Iran, for its own much wider geopolitical interests⁴, provided Tehran with the political and geographic freedom to attack and defeat the separatist movement.

Qazi Mohammed did not attempt to flee the advancing Iranian Army. He and other KDPI leaders, found guilty of treason, were hanged in Mahabad's main square on 31 March 1947. The President's death was later acclaimed by KDPI Secretary General Abdul Rahman Ghassemlou, who "praised Qazi Mohammed for his exemplary conduct

⁴ These are also explained in Chapter Five.

and indefatigable endeavour to further the Kurdish cause at the expense of his own life” (Entessar 1992:19).

Kurdish national politics after Mahabad

The Mahabad experience had both positive and negative impacts for the Kurds, not just in Iran but also in Iraq and Turkey. On the credit side of the ledger, the achievements of the KDPI at Mahabad demonstrated the potential of broad based political parties to achieve Kurdish autonomy. This example led to the formation of a plethora of such organisations, of various sizes, persuasions, and *modi operandi*, in Iraq and Turkey. But all these parties had one common trait: The dissemination of the nationalist message to the Kurdish masses with the objective of transcending tribal politics in pursuit of some level of national self-determination. Opposing this surging ethnic nation(alism), however, were the considerable forces of the three official nation(alism)s of the Persians, Arabs, and Turks. The enormous power disparity between the Kurds and Tehran, Baghdad, and Ankara meant that mass Kurdish nation(alism) would be a prolonged and extremely bloody experience. Seeking territorial and political unity the governments of Iran, Iraq, and Turkey have employed varying degrees of political suppression by banning Kurdish parties, of cultural repression by outlawing the Kurdish language, religion, and customs, and military oppression through martial law, implemented by the wholesale destruction of villages, kidnappings, torture, and murder, mass deportations of the general population to other parts of state territory, etc.

In the aftermath of the KDPI's brief flirt with independence it and other Kurdish political organisations, including the remnants of the *Komala*, were forced into secret operation. Support for the KDPI nosedived, especially amongst the tribes who participated at Mahabad. Following the deathly purge of Qazi Mohammed and his colleagues, the new leadership were identified, arrested, and imprisoned. Kurdish schools and 'government' offices were destroyed, Kurdish printing presses were dismantled, and speaking, writing, and teaching in the Kurdish language were banned.

While Mulla Mustafa Barzani was encamped at Mahabad a group of Kurdish intellectuals in Iraq had established, in August 1946, the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP). This organisation, which evolved from the shortlived communist Kurdish Liberation Party, was led by its Secretary - General, a lawyer named Hamzah Abdullah.

The urban, middle class KDP hierarchy recognised the crucial importance of Barzani as a charismatic, energetic, and appealing religious and secular leader capable of overcoming tribal divisions by acquiring the allegiance of the vital *aghas* and *shaykhs* and their loyal *peshmerga*, so he was consequently appointed as President. Barzani, however, was unable to assume this position in Iraq, as conditions there had not settled after his rebellion against Baghdad in 1944 - 45. Rather, after the demise of the Republic of Mahabad Barzani escaped to the Soviet Union, where he was to spend the next twelve years in exile. With Barzani absent the Kurdish nationalist movement in Iraq floundered through most of the 1950s.

For the Kurds in Turkey the immediate post-war period was one of silent recovery after the brutal repression under the Kemalists during the 1920s and '30s. Circumstances began to change for the better, however, after Turkey's first general election in 1950, in which the Kurds demonstrated "their deep antipathy to Kemalism by voting heavily for the (opposition) Democratic Party" (McDowall 1991:23). *Aghas* and *shaykhs* took on a new importance in the liberalisation that followed, because as still respected leaders of the Kurds they controlled substantial voting blocs. Turkish political parties in general and the new Ankara government in particular recognised this rather ironic Kurdish power source, and the Kurds' voting loyalty was bought, just as the Ottomans had done, by the proffering of gifts. For example, *aghas*, *shaykhs*, and a new landlord class were reinstated with lands and property confiscated in the interwar crackdown, Kurds were elected to the Turkish parliament, some of whom even made it to the cabinet, and for the first time government funded schools, roads, hospitals, and other infrastructure were built in Kurdistan in Turkey.

Despite these reforms the Kurds were still severely restricted by various Turkish laws. Most importantly, specifically Kurdish political parties were (and still are) illegal, so politically minded Kurds had to belong to overtly Turkish organisations and not voice any Kurdish nationalist sentiment. The Kurdish language, dress, and customs also remained illegal, and the Turkish government persisted with the rather optimistic euphemism that the Kurds were not really Kurds at all, but merely 'Mountain Turks who have forgotten their language' (Atarodi 1991:283; Bulloch and Morris 1992:168). Thus behind the facade of liberal democratic reforms the legal repression of Kurds remained

untouched, and as a consequence Kurdish nation(alism) in Turkey in the 1950s was extremely stifled.

Back in Iran a mid 1950s lull in the Kurdish - Persian confrontation which followed the fall of Mahabad enabled the KDPI to begin to reorganise itself and its activities, although still in the utmost secrecy, for it too was an illegal organisation. But over the ensuing years the KDPI was able to expand its urban, middle class following in cities other than Mahabad, which it had been unable to do in the 1940s. The KDPI was also able to recruit *en masse* the tribal *aghas* and *shaykhs* and their *peshmergas*, the constituency so vitally lacking at the Republic. Emerging out of the political shadows, however, was a dangerous strategy for KDPI organisers, who once again were

“increasingly harassed by the authorities. Two leading members of the KDPI Central Committee were arrested and remained in jail until the revolution of 1979. In 1959 at least 250 activists were arrested, whilst others escaped to Baghdad” (McDowall 1991:23).

To escape this new repression the top leadership of the KDPI withdrew across the border into Iraq. This move, however, created tensions with Barzani's KDP, which by the early 1960s was receiving arms and money from Tehran for its own struggle against Baghdad, as Iraq and Iran were mutual archenemies themselves. Continued Persian support became contingent on Barzani ceasing all cooperation with the KDPI and preventing their recrossing back into Iran, isolating the KDPI leadership from the Kurdish population inside and thus undermining Kurdish nation(alism) in their own state. Barzani's self centred interest in the fate of the Kurds in Iraq, his consequent disregard for the Kurds of Iran, and his personal need to retain Tehran's military and financial aid led the KDP to do exactly as the Persians demanded. Tensions between the KDP and KDPI came to a head in 1968, when Barzani executed Sulaiman Muini, a prominent KDPI leader, and more than 40 other members of the KDPI hierarchy living in Iraq. Muini's corpse was subsequently handed over to the Persian authorities who promptly displayed it in a number of Kurdish towns, forcing large numbers of KDPI - loyal *aghas*, *shaykhs*, and *peshmergas* back underground. The Kurdish nationalist movement in Iran simply collapsed.

The KDPI was, however, able to continue the fight, ironically but entirely practically, from Baghdad. For just as the KDP and Tehran had forged an alliance of

convenience against their mutual Arab enemy, the KDPI had denounced Mohammed Reza Shah's regime, immediately attracting the support of the Ba'ath government of Iraq. The enemy of my enemy is indeed my friend. Just as the Persians and Ottomans had played on Kurdish tribal divisions and rivalries, the Persians and Arabs exploited the KDP - KDPI tension and were able to employ each other's Kurds as local proxies to their own antagonism.

This discussion of the first stage of modern Kurdish politics has demonstrated a number of crucial points. First, it has traced the early evolution of the first and most important Kurdish political parties during World War Two and throughout the following two decades or so. This process saw the basis of Kurdish political organisation transform from the individual tribe to pan-tribal (but certainly not universal) modern political parties. Second, and in relation to this same point, the tension between the KDP and the KDPI illustrated that the inter-tribal rivalries of the pre-modern period had gone through a similar transition, and had by no means been eliminated by the rise of Kurdish political parties.

Finally, this section has alluded to the fact that, by the 1960s, the modern state system had become entrenched in the Middle East, unlike the interwar years. This development had the important consequence of fragmenting the Kurds politically and they would now have to negotiate independently with Tehran, Baghdad, and Ankara. In turn, this separation meant that Kurdish nation(alism) in each state would evolve along different trajectories at different rates. It is on this last point that this section is concluded, for the emergence of a truly popular Kurdish nation(alism) in Iran, Iraq, and Turkey occurred at distinct stages from the 1960s on.

Popular nation(alism)

The KDP rebellion, Iraq 1961 - 75

Popular Kurdish nation(alism) first emerged in Iraq in the early 1960s. This assertion is made on the evidence provided by the Kurdish Democratic Party's fourteen year rebellion against a number of successive governments in Baghdad.

As absentee President of the KDP, Mulla Mustafa Barzani returned from exile in the Soviet Union after the Free Officers Revolution of July 1958, which overthrew the Hashemite monarchy and established the Republic of Iraq. Barzani and the new Iraqi President, General Abdul Karim Qasim, entered an alliance of convenience in 1959. For Barzani this collusion had two interrelated purposes, the affirmation of his pre-eminence amongst Kurdish nationalists, and the quashing of other Kurdish political parties, as well as some remaining tribes, opposed to the KDP. These other Kurdish organisations were labelled as pro-monarchist by the new Republic's regime, thus providing the motivation for Qasim to arm and finance the KDP in its struggle against Kurdish rival groups.

The partnership was, however, to be shortlived. After obtaining government recognition Barzani was, by 1960, demanding Kurdish autonomy in Kurdistan in Iraq. Qasim, realising that Barzani had become too dominant within the KDP and *vis - a - vis* other Kurdish groups, began to distance his government from Barzani and to support rival factions. By the summer of 1961 the KDP was in open conflict with their Kurdish opponents. This skirmishing produced cracks within the KDP. The urbanised, democratically minded members of the party's hierarchy regarded the intra-Kurdish fighting as a tribal affair which served nobody's interests but Baghdad's and who resented Barzani's authoritarian, tribal leadership style.

Barzani, however, still commanded the largest following, and especially a substantial *peshmerga* force. By December 1961 Barzani's troops, estimated at more than 6 000 and far outnumbering any other Kurdish force (McDowall 1991:27), occupied a 480 by 112 kilometre crescent of Kurdistan in Iraq, nearly 54 000 km², from the Syrian border to the city of Khanaqin. KDP control of this substantial slice of Iraqi territory, and Barzani's continued demands for autonomy, was too much for Qasim to remain a bystander, so Iraq's military was mobilised and entered the conflict against Barzani towards the end of 1961.

Baghdad's entry into the war on the side of the anti-KDP Kurds seemed to signal the end for Barzani's rebellion. But the experienced campaigner was able to find a new patron, the government in Tehran, who assumed Baghdad's role of providing arms and money. This partnership was a major escalation in the conflict. Although Baghdad was able to seize major cities and towns, Barzani's *peshmergas* changed to guerilla tactics

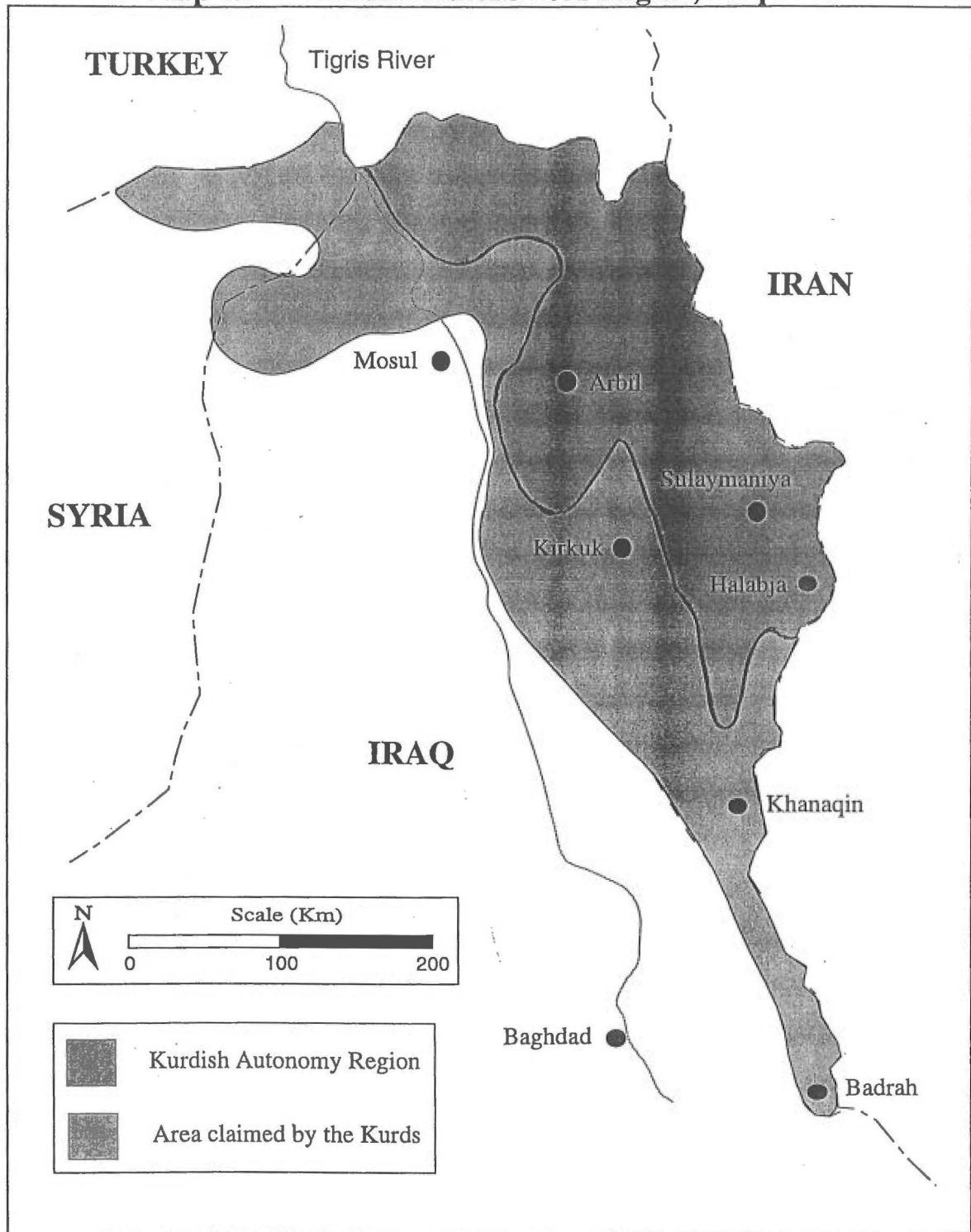
rather than large scale engagements and maintained control of the countryside. This anarchic state of affairs persisted throughout the 1960s, the KDP continuing to receive support from Tehran, and Barzani continuing to build up his forces. On the other hand, Baghdad was beginning to realise that it was fighting a war it could not win on the battlefield.

The new Ba'ath Socialist government, which seized power in a two-step military coup in July 1968, was acutely aware of the improbability of a military victory over the Kurds. A truce was sought at the negotiating table, and on 11 March 1970 a peace agreement was signed between the KDP and Baghdad, laying the foundations for the establishment of a Kurdish Autonomy Region (KAR; Map 4:3). In the following months

“a number of clauses of the agreement were implemented, including the amendment to the constitution (recognising the existence of two nationalities in Iraq), the appointment of senior Kurdish officials including some members of the KDP as governors of Dohuk and Arbil...Kurdish police chiefs for the three provinces of Dohuk, Arbil, and Sulaymaniya. Factories were established, and agrarian reform quickened” (McDowall 1991:29).

But by 1972 the agreement, known as the ‘March Manifesto’ and supposed to be fully implemented by 11 March 1974, was beginning to fall apart. Encouraged by Iran Barzani increased his demands of political and military authority within the KAR. Clearly concerned with Barzani’s ongoing and ever closer relationship with Tehran, Baghdad began to delay the implementation of the March Manifesto’s remaining provisions. Most important among these was a new census, which was to be used to delineate the KAR’s geographic area using the 50 percent population threshold.

As 11 March 1974 approached the March Manifesto was quickly becoming a dead letter. Baghdad, “faced with a protracted war it could not win” (Entessar 1992:75), realised that an alternative proposal had to be formulated. Their new plan, unveiled on 12 December 1973, was immediately rejected by the KDP, for two reasons. First, the new census was to be cancelled and the boundaries of the KAR were to be determined by the 1957 census. Second, the document included no provision for a proportion of Iraq’s oil revenues to be spent exclusively in Iraq, a consistent KDP demand. A third plan announced on 11 March 1974, the very day that the March Manifesto was to be fully implemented, was similarly rejected by the KDP.

Map 4:3 Kurdish Autonomous Region, Iraq 1970

Source: JRO 1991: Between pages 2 - 3.

The collapse of the March Manifesto precipitated an instant renewal of fighting between Kurds and Arabs. The KDP, heavily supported by Iranian weaponry and money, now had a *peshmerga* force estimated to be a staggering 50 000 strong (McDowall 1989:9). But the KDP, and Barzani in particular, still had Kurdish opponents, and many thousand Kurds fought alongside Arab government forces. Despite this Kurdish division, by 1975 Baghdad had realised that it was now fighting a war that it could not win -

unless it was able to break the ties between Tehran and the KDP. As a means of achieving this objective, the Ba'ath government conceded on its hitherto steadfast refusal to resolve its own dispute with Tehran by redrawing, in Iran's favour, the international boundary along the strategic Shatt al-Arab waterway⁵. In return Tehran agreed to cease its military and financial support of the KDP.

The Barzani rebellion instantly collapsed, as did the whole KDP. A pro-Barzani faction remained loyal to Mulla Mustafa's sons, Massoud and Idris, who assumed the KDP leadership after their father was once again exiled from Iraq. An anti-Barzani faction, however, accused Barzani of betraying the Kurdish cause and under the leadership of Jalal Talabani formed the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) in June 1976. But there is no doubt that Mulla Mustafa Barzani was a great Kurdish nationalist who inspired the emergence of a truly popular Kurdish nation(alism) in Iraq. As McDowall (1991:26) writes, "no other Kurd could so rally rank and file Kurds as could he", to which Entessar (1992:55) adds, "Mulla Mustafa's success was....a result of his ability to combine secular (as an *agha*) and religious (as a *shaykh*) power into a highly charismatic leadership". Mulla Mustafa Barzani died in the United States in 1979 after an incredible, but ultimately fruitless, half a century of rebellion against central government.

The Kurds in Turkey, 1961 - 1978

The KDP rebellion in Iraq was a source of great inspiration to the Kurds in Turkey, and in 1965 the Kurdish Democratic Party of Turkey (KDPT) was formed with the specific objective of achieving complete independence through the creation of a separate Kurdish state. This organisation was established and operated in the utmost secrecy, for it was (and is) illegal to form overtly Kurdish political parties and to express Kurdish nationalist sentiments. Thus although the Kurds were enfranchised and could hold political office, they had project a Turkish identity and be members in a Turkish party. For these reasons the KDPT maintained clandestine operations, mobilising and organising the Kurdish populace until, on 3 August 1967, the KDPY came out of the political woodwork. On this day the KDPT staged mass public demonstrations which attracted 10 000 Kurds in Silvan and 25 000 Kurds in Diyarbakir onto the streets.

⁵

This agreement was signed in Algiers on 6 March 1975 between Mohammed Reza Shah and Iraqi Vice President Saddam Hussein.

McDowall (1996:18) writes that these rallies were “the first expression of Kurdish anger (in Turkey) for 30 years”.

The KDPT and the Kurds in general, however, were to pay a heavy price for this outburst, with the government in Ankara establishing special army units to survey and subdue the Kurdish population. Many Kurds were employed by the army to report any Kurdish political activity, and suspects were arrested *en masse*, detained, tortured, and even murdered in prison, their homes searched and often torched. Under this onslaught the KDPT, a solely political party with no military defence, disappeared by the late 1960s.

Despite its short life the KDPT had succeeded in pushing the hitherto denied ‘Kurdish problem’ into the public eye. Turkish opposition parties of the left, also banned from referring to the Kurds by name and certainly to any kind of Kurdish nationalism, defied government strictures and increasingly expressed an interest in the Kurdish cause. In the late 1960s ties between a plethora of new explicitly Kurdish (and thereby illegal) political parties and a similarly vast array of Turkish organisations of the left became ever closer. These new relationships were exemplified by the association between the Organisation of Revolutionary Kurdish Youth (DDKO) and the Turkish Workers Party (TWP). The DDKO was established in 1969 by Kurds who were also members of the latter. By October 1970 the TWP had decided to recognise the Kurds as a distinct ethnic group and the legitimacy of their struggle, and were immediately outlawed by the regime in Ankara.

Six months later, in March 1971, the Turkish army staged a successful coup and formed a military government. On the premise of pre-empting an imminent Kurdish uprising the new regime moved quickly and decisively against the numerous Kurdish groups and dissident Turkish parties. The DDKO and the TWP were, of course, especially targeted, “their leaders and activists were imprisoned, and the military initiated a new round of sustained attacks on Kurdish villages, resulting in their destruction and the deportation of their residents” (Entessar 1992:90 - 91). This wave of suppression ushered in a period of “relative tranquillity” (McDowall 1996:410), but by 1974 a “rejuvenated Kurdish movement had a broader social base and was more radical in its demands than in the 1960s” (Entessar 1992:91).

The repression of the early 1970s was indeed a powerful force in the mobilisation of a great number of Kurds into multifarious groups. This Kurdish political reorganisation centred on and was dominated by the revival of the old DDKO, which became the new Revolutionary Democratic Cultural Association (DDKD), which by 1978 had a total membership of 50 000 (McDowall 1991:20). The emergence of a mass Kurdish nation(alism) in Turkey, inspired by Barzani's KDP in Iraq and given considerable impetus by a stubborn and brutal Turkish government, was complete by the late 1970s.

The KDPI and the Islamic Revolution, Iran 1978 - 80

By the time the KDP's fourteen year rebellion against Baghdad had imploded in 1975, the Kurds in Iran were on the fast track to achieving a popular Kurdish nation(alism) after the Mahabad defeat, the reprisals that followed in the 1950s, and the period of inactivity during the 1960s. And once again the KDPI was the main focus of the Kurds' mobilisation. The KDPI of the mid 1970s, however, was a fundamentally different political party than the KDPI of the Mahabad Republic. After Mohammed Reza Shah's brutal suppression the KDPI was able to begin the process of overcoming its previous burden; the lack of popular support. Koohi-Kamali (1992:181) neatly describes this crucial change, claiming that during the 1970s the KDPI

"was rapidly being transformed from a relatively small underground organisation into a mass party with a sizeable membership and a reasonably clear programme for Kurdish autonomy....The KDPI received its main support from urban middle class intellectuals....merchants and government employees, and from the tribal elites".

The loyalty of the tribal elites enabled the KDPI, for the first time, to gather together a "credible military force" (Koohi-Kamali 1992:182). In combination with an astute urban intellectual leadership, headed by Secretary General Abdul Rahman Ghassemlou, the KDPI represented a modern political party which had subsumed tribal loyalties to a popular Kurdish nation(alism).

The political and military strength of the KDPI was demonstrated in the lead up to the Islamic Revolution of January 1979, which overthrew the Shah's regime and installed the Shi'a fundamentalist government of Ayatollah Khomeini. Ghassemlou, recognising the imminent downfall of Mohammed Reza Shah's government, aligned the KDPI with the Shi'a opposition. When Khomeini's forces moved against Tehran, so too

did the KDPI's *peshmergas*, who seized control of local police stations and army barracks. The more organised, popular, and focussed KDPI, with its larger, better equipped, and more disciplined military arm, were intent on establishing a Kurdish autonomy region within the new Iran.

And the KDPI believed its chances of obtaining that status were extremely good, for two important reasons. First, because "Ghassemlou had consistently advocated cooperation with other revolutionary groups" (McDowall 1989:17), and secondly because the KDPI had moderated its previous demands of secession from Iran to autonomy within Iran. Moreover, the draft Islamic constitution was a further source of hope for the Kurds, for it guaranteed equal rights for ethnic minorities, of the Islamic Republic, allowed all Muslims to maintain their own school of religious thought, and permitted the use of local languages in local schools and press.

But it soon became clear that the Shi'a fundamentalist government would renege on such promises. As Khomeini himself put it,

"Sometimes the word (minority) is used to refer to people such as the Kurds....These people should not be called (a minority), because this term implies that there is a difference between these brothers. In Islam (that is *Shi'a* Islam) such a difference has no place at all. There is no difference between Muslims who speak different languages" (Quoted in Entessar 1992:29).

The majority of Kurds and certainly the KDPI, however, are Sunni Muslims, and as such are more moderate than their Shi'a counterparts. Khomeini's claims were thereby rejected, the KDPI recognising that there *was* a difference between "Muslim brothers" and between "Muslims who speak different languages". These divergent positions precipitated armed clashes between KDPI *peshmergas* and Khomeini's Revolutionary Guards, or *pasdaran*, which increased in intensity and frequency throughout the summer of 1979. Events on the battlefield reached a climax in August, when Khomeini deployed the Iranian army, with helicopter gunships, jet aircraft, tanks, and heavy artillery, against KDPI forces.

The military conflict eliminated nearly all possibility that the new Islamic Constitution would provide for Kurdish cultural and political recognition. This fear was

confirmed in November 1979, when the final draft of the constitution was passed by the Iranian *majlis* (parliament) in which

“All mention of the equality of the ethnic peoples was dropped; there was no guarantee of the religious rights of the Sunni and as for the use of local languages, the constitution stated that local languages could be used in the press, the mass media, and schools, but only alongside Persian, and that school textbooks had to be in Persian. The constitution clearly had no intention of accommodating the ethnic aspirations of the minority peoples” (Koochi-Kamali 1992:185-86).

Tehran's repudiation of Kurdish ethnicity, religion, and language meant that the fighting persisted well into 1980. Although the Persians were able to regain control of major cities and towns, the KDPI continued to dominate the countryside, from where they mounted a guerilla war against Tehran. Secretary General Ghassemlou and Iranian President Bani-Sadr entered negotiations over a ceasefire and some level of 'self-administration', but offers and counter-offers were consistently rejected by both parties. The undoubtedly limited chances of reaching a negotiated settlement, however, were completely overridden, on 22 September 1980, by a more pressing crisis: Iraq's invasion of Iran. In the consequent eight year Persian Gulf war, the KDPI was to play a significant political and military role, further evidence of the emergence of popular Kurdish nation(alism) in Iran.

The KDP, PUK, and KDPI in the Iran - Iraq war, 1980 - 88

It is useful to review the situation of the three major Kurdish parties, the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) in Iraq and the Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran (KDPI), at the moment of Baghdad's invasion. The KDP, although it had recommenced minor military operations, had not recovered from its devastating defeat in 1975, from the severance of its military and financial lifelines from Tehran, nor from the exile and death of Mullah Mustafa Barzani in 1979. The decline of the KDP was compensated by the rise of Jalal Talabani's PUK, which had gained Syrian endorsement, established its headquarters in the capital Damascus and its branch office in Sulaymaniya. The KDPI, alienated by Khomeini's new Shi'a Islamic regime, were pushed further into the arms of Baghdad, who willingly opened the military warehouse and the treasury purse-strings.

Iraq's belligerence prompted the new government in Tehran to declare the 1975 Algiers agreement null and void, and immediately resumed supplying the KDP with arms and cash. Given Baghdad's support of the KDPI, this renewed Tehran - KDP link meant that the two state governments were both using their opponent's Kurds to destabilise each other. So once again the KDP and the KDPI became local proxies to a wider conflict: Tehran used the KDP to fight Baghdad and Baghdad used the KDPI to fight Tehran in the Kurdistan regions, while Arabs and Persians fought each other along the central and southern fronts. Both Tehran's and Baghdad's strategy, of course, was to force the other to commit troops to fighting the Kurds along a northern front, weakening their opponent's presence on the more critical central and southern fronts, thus increasing their chances of victory. This rather simple scenario was complicated by the Syrian backed PUK who, having split from the KDP in 1975, often found themselves in open disagreement, even violence, with the Barzani brothers.

This situation reveals a substantial contradiction: While the Arab and Persian governments both vehemently denied the rights of Kurds and openly fought the Kurdish nationalist movement at home, both recognised and exploited the very same struggle within their opponent's boundaries. Similarly, Kurds on both sides of the border temporarily forgot the previous atrocities committed by their new sponsor on fellow Kurds in each state. Given these contradictory client - patron relationships it is little wonder that Kurd fought Kurd during the eight year Iran - Iraq war.

And that war very quickly fought itself to a standstill on the central and southern fronts. After the initial success of Iraq's invasion, Iranian forces mobilised *en masse* and, with the same Islamic fervour that had carried the Shi'a regime to power, repelled the Sunni Arab enemy. Within a few short months Iraqi forces were entrenched along a 1 000 kilometre long defensive line barely inside Iranian territory. "The scene", writes O'Ballance (1996:123) quickly became "reminiscent of the First World War, with Iraqi troops holding ever stronger entrenchments and Iranian 'human waves' battering themselves against them, mostly unsuccessfully". This "bloody stalemate between the two giants" (McDowall 1991:34), which was to ultimately cost more than a million lives, continued in this theatre almost unchanged for the entire duration. The military confrontation in Kurdistan, however, was to be much more fluid, but certainly no less bloody.

In the summer of 1982 Tehran launched a concerted assault on KDPI held territory in Kurdistan in Iran. By November it had captured the road between Piranshahr and Sardasht, a serious blow to the KDPI because this was a vital supply line in its guerilla war. But such tactics of warfare avoided direct engagement with Persian forces, and it was not until early 1984 that the KDPI was evicted altogether from Iran and into Kurdistan in Iraq. The Kurdish civilian population was, of course, caught up in the conflict; indeed McDowall (1989:24) claims that 27 500 Kurds had been killed by this stage of the war, of whom only 2 500 were *peshmergas*, a civilian - military ratio of 10 to one. The arrival of the KDPI remnants in Iraq, however, merely exacerbated its conflict with the KDP who, being dependent on Tehran's supply of arms and money, had assisted in the operations (Koochi-Kamali 1992:188).

But the KDP's main priority in the first years of the war was, as usual, to fight the Ba'ath regime in Baghdad, which from July 1979 had been headed by President Saddam Hussein. The PUK was also active militarily against the Arabs, and between them their estimated *peshmerga* force of 15 000 tied down nearly 100 000 Arab troops. The KDP and PUK, it must be remembered, shared a mutual animosity towards each other, and on occasion this erupted into violence. Ill-feeling between the KDP and PUK ran particularly high in 1984, after the PUK agreed to a ceasefire with Baghdad. When the KDPI arrived at this time, it was no surprise that they and the PUK stood together against the KDP.

Beginning in 1985, however, the KDP, PUK, and other Kurdish parties in Iraq began a rapprochement that resulted, in July 1987, in the formation of an Iraqi Kurdistan Front (IKF). By emphasising the member parties' common goal of national self-determination, thus down-playing their political differences, the IKF adopted a strategy which

“called for the formation of an Iraqi National Front of all (that is, including Sunni and Shi'a Arab) opposition parties, the overthrow of Saddam Hussein, an end to the Iran - Iraq conflict on the basis of mutual respect of sovereignty both sides of the international border, and full Kurdish national rights and democratic choice”.

All these demands indicated that the IKF had moderated the previous objective of Kurdish self-determination through full independence to autonomy *within* Iraq. This

important change in the Kurdish nationalist strategy reflected a sophisticated political realisation that the prospects for a sovereign Kurdish state, especially one that also included parts or all of Kurdistan in Iran, let alone Turkey, were extremely remote.

The IKF's agenda attracted the support of Tehran, and during 1987 KDP, PUK, and Persian forces cooperated in military operations in Kurdistan in Iraq. The Kurds dominated the countryside, rural villages, and small towns, and hindering Arab troop movements by cutting road links.

The establishment of the IKF was perceived in Baghdad as a great threat to Iraq's survival. After decades of exploiting animosities between Kurdish tribes and more recently political parties as a means of keeping the Kurds divided and thus of minimal danger, the sudden appearance of a *united* Kurdish nationalist organisation was an unprecedented moment of, for the Kurds, national glory and, for the Arabs, of great menace. Saddam Hussein responded to this growing peril, even before the formal announcement of the IKF's existence, with what became over the next two years perhaps the most brutal repression of any Kurdish nationalist movement ever, in either Iran, Iraq, or Turkey. For beginning on 15 April 1987 the Arab government resorted to the use of chemical weapons against the Kurds. By the middle of the year, when the IKF entered the public arena, "chemical weapons were in daily use" (Karadaghi 1993:225). Countless thousands died in this most vicious of retributions.

While the deployment of chemical weapons was a grisly new twist in the violent history of the Kurds, these latest reprisals also included a return to some old strategies of suppression. Foremost amongst these were the wholesale destruction of villages, up to 3 000 claims McDowall (1991:38), the mass deportation of half a million Kurds (McDowall 1991:38) to detention camps in the deserts of southern and western Iraq, and large scale arbitrary arrest and execution. In strategic areas Baghdad also enforced 'free fire zones', "in which any living creatures - human or otherwise - were to be shot on sight" (McDowall 1989:27). As a result of all these tactics many Kurds began to flee to Iran, Syria, and Turkey. Despite this intense and brutal oppression the IKF continued to operate a military campaign into 1988, with Tehran's support, and optimism persisted that Saddam Hussein's downfall was imminent. Continued military successes, for example, the capture of the town of Halabja on 15 March, however, were not steps to

ultimate victory but, on the contrary, merely provocation for even more horrendous reprisals than those exacted during the previous year.

And it was the IKF - Persian occupied town of Halabja that was the first to be struck, the day after Arab forces were evicted. Saddam Hussein again used chemical weapons, the mustard and nerve gas artillery shells raining down for several hours. The *Middle East Watch* reported that:

“Dead bodies - human and animal - littered the streets, huddled in doorways, slumped over the steering wheels of their cars. Survivors stumbled around, laughing hysterically, before collapsing....Those who had been directly exposed to the gas found that their symptoms worsened as the night wore on. Many children died along the way and were abandoned where they fell” (Quoted in McDowall 1996:358).

The horror at Halabja has come to symbolise the ‘tragic history of the Kurds’ (Bulloch and Morris 1992).

The incident at Halabja also signalled the beginning of yet another round of ferocious attacks on the Kurds between March and September 1988. Known collectively as the *Anfal* operations⁶, these were to surpass in barbarity even the offensives of the previous year. The Kurdish situation was rendered even more dire by Iran’s exhaustion from the war with Iraq, and Tehran’s subsequent acceptance, on 20 August 1988, of Security Council Resolution 598, a year old UN ceasefire resolution.

Within a week Baghdad initiated an all out attack on the remaining IKF positions, with ground and air forces operating in unison. Chemical weapons were once again deployed on Kurdish villages and towns, and even on those Kurds, some 120 000, attempting to reach safety in Iran, Syria, and Turkey. Mass deportations, internments, and executions continued with “a brutality reminiscent of Nazi death camps” (McDowall 1996:359). ‘Activists’ claim that the *Anfal* operations claimed an astonishing 186 000 Kurdish lives and destroyed no less than 4 000 villages (Buckley 1994:11). McDowall (1996:360) asserts that by the end of the war a staggering 1.5 million Kurds, one third of the Kurdish population of Iraq, had been “forcibly resettled”, and that an incredulous 45 000 km² of Kurdistan in Iraq, some sixty percent, had been simply “cleared of Kurds”.

Given these statistics it is little wonder that Buckley (1994:11) describes *Anfal* as “a carefully planned programme of extermination”, while Karadaghi (1993:225) claims that *Anfal* “undeniably reached the level of genocide”.

At the start of the Iran - Iraq war the KDP, PUK, and KDPI saw the conflict as an opportunity to press their claims for Kurdish self-determination. By the cessation of hostilities all three parties were as far away from achieving that objective as they had ever been. For neither party held any significant amounts of territory, their *peshmerga* forces had taken a battering, and their political leadership entered “a period of self-doubt and self-criticism” (McDowall 1991:42). On this last point there was general recognition that the Kurds’ lack of unity, not only between parties in different states but also between parties of the same state, had cost them dearly. The IKF, however, had shown that a united political front was both possible and critical. But its dependence on Tehran had also illustrated, once again, the Kurds’ vulnerability to such alliances of convenience. The KDP, PUK, and KDPI faced many individual and collective dilemmas indeed in the aftermath of the Persian Gulf War.

The PKK in Turkey, 1978 - 96

Although the Kurdish renaissance in Turkey during the mid 1970s was led by the Revolutionary Democratic Cultural Association (DDKD), it was another group, the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK), that from its inception in 1978 spearheaded Kurdish nation(alism), and has done so ever since. The origins of the PKK can be traced to the early 1970s when one Abdullah Ocalan, then a student in Ankara, formed a small group amongst the rapidly growing Kurdish proletariat in Turkey’s main industrial centres. This organisation was known as *Apocular*, the followers of *Apo*, *Apo* being Ocalan’s nickname. The *Apocular* was a strongly Marxist - Leninist party that deplored the exploitation of both rural and urban Kurds by Turkish overlords, thus framing the Kurdish nationalist movement in terms of class struggle and popular revolution. Despite its Marxist - Leninist dogma the *Apocular* decided against linking forces with the Turkish left, and in 1975 Ocalan and his small band of lieutenants withdrew from Ankara and returned to Kurdistan in Turkey in order to establish popular support.

⁶ *Anfal* is an Arab word meaning ‘the spoils of victory’, and is also the name of a chapter in the Koran.

The *Apocular's* call for working class rebellion instantly struck a chord with the Kurds of economically underdeveloped eastern Turkey. By 1978 the *Apocular's* following was such that it had to reform itself, and subsequently became the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). Again led by Abdullah Ocalan, the PKK openly demanded Kurdish national self-determination through nothing less than complete independence in a Kurdish state. Ironically, Ocalan and many of the PKK leadership spoke only Turkish, not Kurdish. But this peculiarity did not detract from the PKK's legitimacy; quite the reverse, in fact. As McDowall (1996:419) notes:

"the PKK's nationalism was all the more virulent because the founders sought to recreate an identity they felt they had lost....For the PKK the intensity of Kurdish national feeling was accentuated by the loss of spoken Kurdish among its founding members".

In September 1980 the Turkish military staged its third successful coup in twenty years, seizing power and immediately "made it clear that they intended to brook no expression of the Kurdish movement or identity whatsoever" (McDowall 1991:19). Given the PKK's by now overt activities a new crackdown was thus inevitable, and nearly 2 000 PKK members, including some of the central committee, were arrested. The remaining PKK leaders, including Ocalan, managed evade the Turkish army and escape over the border into Syria. With backing from Damascus the PKK quietly prepared itself for a return to Kurdistan in Turkey, training a sizeable *peshmerga* force for a planned armed struggle against the Turkish government. Northern Syria and northern Iraq thus became the focus of PKK activity throughout 1981 - 83, with Turkey still under military rule, and many PKK basecamps were established in these regions.

With the restoration of civilian rule in Turkey in late 1983 the PKK began to test the water by staging cross border attacks on government installations. Ankara immediately responded by stepping up security measures "against those ethnic nationalism in an effort to destroy Kurdish ethnic identity" (Entessar 1992:98). The mutual animosity between the PKK and the Turkish government reached a new animosity on 15 August 1984 when PKK *peshmerga* killed 24 Turkish soldiers in attacks on the towns of Eruh and Shemdinli. Approximately 1 000 Kurds were arrested and imprisoned in Diyarbakir. Initially the prosecution demanded 30 of these captives receive the death sentence; by early 1985 this figure had reached a rather incredulous 600 (McDowall 1991:79).

The PKK's resort to what is essentially a terrorist strategy of engagement is representative of its overtly separatist posture. This military and political extremism has, not surprisingly, alienated the PKK from other more moderate but less powerful autonomy seeking Kurdish voices. Even some elements of the general Kurdish population is disgruntled with the PKK, for often it is them that get caught in the cross-fire and bear the brunt of government reprisals. Indeed, a virtually continuous 'state of emergency' has been brutally enforced by the Turkish army since 1984. In the decade following the first PKK attacks in 1984 McDowall (1996:418) estimates that this conflict, on both sides, has cost 12 000 lives. By this year the death toll may well have reached as many as 20 000 (*The Christchurch Press* 2 September 1996:8). Despite these losses, the destruction of villages, the forced removal of people from their homes and land, the continued economic underdevelopment, thousands of Kurds continue the fight for full Kurdish independence.

A key factor in the persistence of the PKK's campaign is the use of the mountain basecamps established during the early 1980s in northern Syria and northern Iraq. These hideaways continue to be used for training *peshmergas* and launching their attacks. The mountainous terrain and their location over the border supposedly gives these strongholds double protection from Ankara's reach. But on occasion, and with tacit permission from Baghdad, Turkey has employed the tactic of 'hot pursuit' to chase PKK *peshmerga* over the border on their return home from operations and to attack the camps themselves. Such cross-border incursions were common throughout 1986 and '87, while Baghdad was preoccupied with its war with Iran and perceived Ankara's raids not as violations of its sovereignty but as beneficial to its own war against the Kurds of Iraq. Indeed, the PKK's presence in northern Iraq, especially when the Turkish army visited, was the source of considerable consternation to the KDP who began to feel pressured from both sides. But after the Persian Gulf War ceasefire in August 1988 Baghdad reversed its acquiescence to such obvious breaches of Iraq's territorial sovereignty, and Ankara's hot pursuits across the border ceased.

The Kurd - Turk conflict in Turkey, however, has continued essentially unabated since 1988. A number of ceasefire agreements throughout the past eight years have failed to develop into any type of lasting peace. That goal, so long as the PKK is able to continue its terrorist campaign and maintains its separatist position, and the Turkish

government persists with its military suppression and denies Kurdish cultural and political rights, will remain a distant mirage. Moreover, although the PKK's political stance and guerilla operations do not rest well with many Kurds, Abdullah Ocalan and his organisation will continue to dominate mass Kurdish nation(alism) in Turkey.

The KDPI since 1988

After the Iran - Iraq war both the Tehran government and the KDPI were in weak financial and military situations. With both sides exhausted Secretary General Ghassemlou believed that the KDPI's post-war reconstruction would be best served by negotiating a limited autonomy agreement with the Persian government. This immediately caused a split in the KDPI, with the more virulent Kurdish nationalists still demanding the pursuit of complete independence. Ghassemlou was adamant, however, that negotiated autonomy was the most course most likely to bring success, and met secretly with government officials on a number of occasions throughout 1988 and into 1989. The death of Ayatollah Khomeini in June 1989 and the more moderate incoming head of state, President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, gave Ghassemlou increased cause for optimism.

But only a month later Ghassemlou's and the KDPI's hopes lay in tatters: The Secretary General was assassinated on 13 July 1989, in a Vienna hotel room where he was to meet representatives of Rafsanjani's new government (Buckley 1994:13). McDowall (1991:41) analyses the effect of Ghassemlou's demise:

"For many years (Ghassemlou) had been recognised as the most able politician of the whole Kurdish people. Since there was little doubt his assassins were the very Iranian delegates with whom he was negotiating, it put the feasibility of negotiation in doubt".

Unfortunately, Ghassemlou's successor, Sadegh Sarafkandi, suffered the same fate on 18 September 1992, this time in a Berlin restaurant. Three other senior KDPI officials were also killed in this attack. O'Ballance (1996:178) solemnly notes that "it appeared as though the Iranian government was running a secret assassination squad to help it control Kurdish insurrection activities".

The June 1988 split in the KDPI and murder of Ghassemlou in July 1989 and of Sarafkandi in September 1992 have been serious setbacks to the KDPI and the Kurdish

nationalist movement in Iran as a whole. But Kurdish nation(alism) in Iran is undoubtedly now a mass phenomenon, thanks largely to the work of the KDPI, which is now a truly popular political party with an optimistic future. Indeed, as Koochi-Kamali (1992:192) explains:

“The KDPI of 1989 is a very different organisation from that of 1947, when the Kurdish republic collapsed....Militarily and politically it is better organised. It has thousands of members and supporters who have been involved in the national identity struggle for some time. Surviving the years of the (Islamic) revolution and its aftermath has transformed the KDPI from an inexperienced underground party, highly dependent on the Kurds in Iraq, into a relatively independent political force which could not only determine the destiny of Iranian Kurdistan, but may also have a significant influence on the future of the country as a whole”.

For the KDP and PUK in Iraq, and the government in Baghdad, the Persian Gulf War had also cost them dearly, and a period of relative calm followed the end of the war. This ‘peace’ was broken by Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait on 2 August 1990, precipitating a series of events that are best evaluated at the global scale. As these events involved the KDP and PUK to a considerable degree, the analysis of these two organisations since the end of the Iran - Iraq war are also best evaluated at the global scale, and is therefore left until the third section of Chapter Five.

Conclusion

This discussion has emphatically demonstrated the *international* conflict in Kurdistan from the late nineteenth century to the present. In doing so it has also traced the development of Kurdish nation(alism), which demands the recognition of the separate and distinct concepts of nation and state and the rejection of the assumption that all states are nation-states. Moreover, this chapter has illustrated a strong, longstanding, and bloody example of a conflict that is far more than a ‘civil war’, but something less than a conventional ‘international’ conflict. The *international* conflict in Kurdistan, therefore, represents a case that rests uneasily between conflict research’s two categories, and therefore is evidence of the need to reconceptualise this important phenomenon.

Chapter Five

Global geopolitics and the Kurdish *international* conflict

“The Kurds are the orphans of the international community”

Mullah Mustafa Barzani¹

¹ Quoted in Atarodi 1991:282.

Introduction

This third and final case study chapter increases the geopolitical scale of analysis from the Middle East to the global, and examines the *international* conflict in Kurdistan in global geopolitics. This discussion, therefore, confronts international relations' division between 'international' and domestic politics, and hence also of conflict research's separation of 'international' conflict from civil war, in simple accordance with state boundaries. I will demonstrate that this is not an allegation based on a one off special circumstance but an enormous contradiction resulting from eighty years of Kurdish geopolitical history at the global scale. I shall also argue that the exploitation of the Kurds by foreign governments for their own much broader geopolitical purposes, a constant aspect of the Kurds' role in *international* relations, is an implicit recognition of the Kurds as a distinct political community capable of waging sustained 'civil wars' to weaken respective state governments. This argument, again, illustrates that the nation and state concepts are not equitable and their conflation into nation-state is inappropriate.

The Kurds' involvement at the global scale is divided into three time periods, coinciding with three global geopolitical discourses that have permeated the Middle East during the twentieth century. The first of these was European colonialism, which in the aftermath of World War One and the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire brought the state system to the Middle East: But not, as we know, to the Kurds. The Kurds and Colonialism in the interwar years are analysed in this first section.

The great upheaval of the Second World War displaced European colonialism, which in turn was replaced by the all - pervasive geopolitical world order that became known as the Cold War. The Kurds and the Cold War, which lasted until the collapse of communism across Eastern Europe and, in particular, the implosion of the Soviet Union, between November 1989 and December 1991, are analysed in the second section.

The third and final section examines the Kurds in the much heralded but highly ambiguous 'new world order'. Indeed, a number of contradictory doctrines appear to be competing for the mantle of *the* new world order's geopolitical discourse; hence the concept, not of one dominant order but of many rival disorders, for example, Fukuyama's (1989) "triumph of liberalism". One contender, the "rogue state doctrine"

(Klare 1995a; 1995b), has characterised Western and especially US policy towards Iraq since the latter's invasion of Kuwait on 2 August 1990, and has been all important as far as the Kurds are concerned. For this reason the rogue state doctrine is employed as an analytical tool to examine the Kurds in the global geopolitics of the post-Cold War world.

The Kurds and colonialism, 1914 - 39

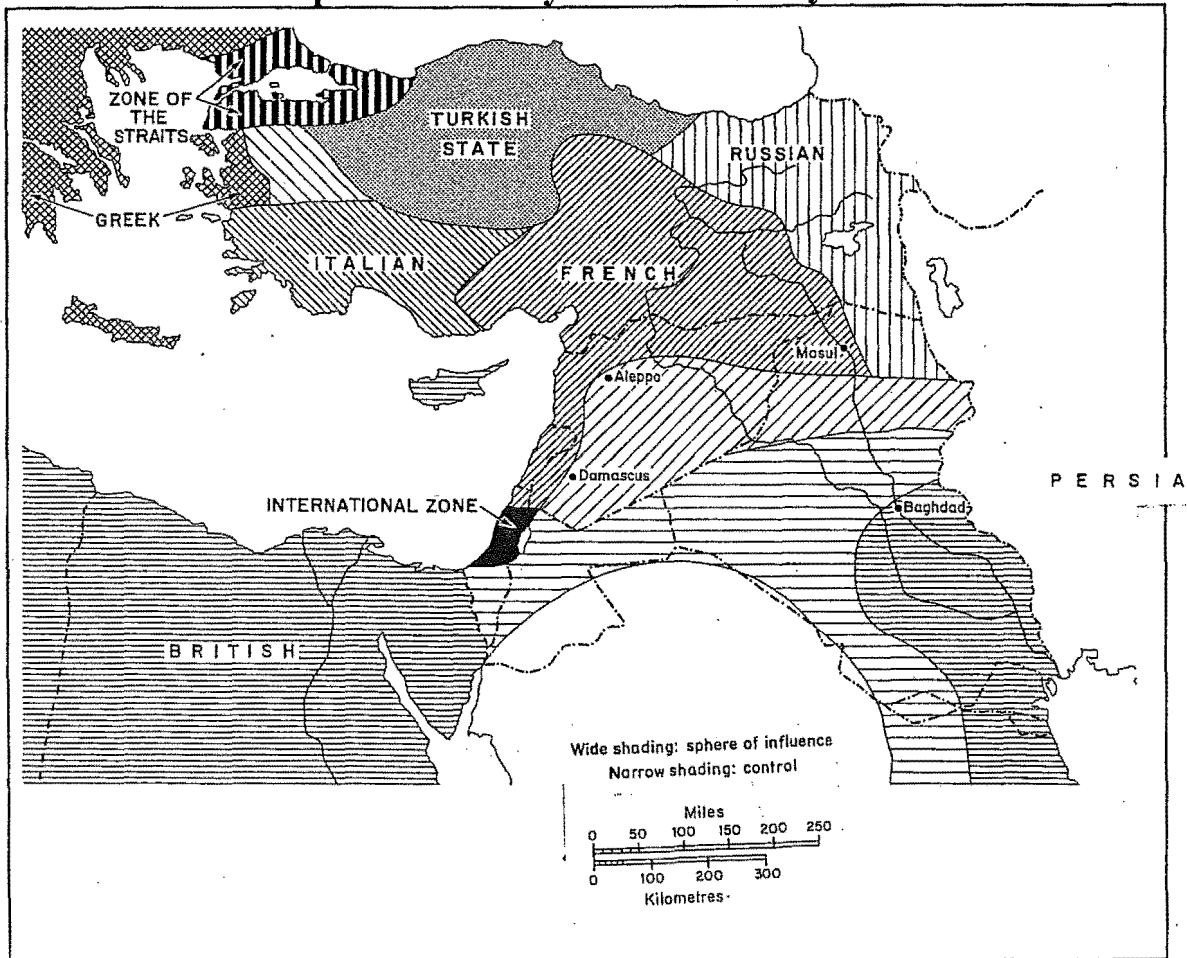
While this section concentrates on the Kurds' colonial relationship with Britain, it is important to note that Britain was by no means the only colonial power in the Middle East. Two other major colonial powers with extensive interests in the area warrant special mention: France held the League of Nations mandate for the territories that became the independent states of Lebanon (1943) and Syria (1946); and Russia, or the Soviet Union after the Bolshevik Revolution of November 1917, was able to annex the Republics of Armenia and Azerbaijan into the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic (1920), but who was unable to achieve the same result in eastern Anatolia, where it had been deeply involved prior to the latter's incorporation into the new Republic of Turkey (1923). Other foreign states, such as Greece, Italy, and the United States, were also present, but their involvement was relatively minor and essentially superfluous to the Kurdish centric story to be told here. This discussion therefore focuses on Britain, the mandate power for the territory that evolved into fully independent Iraq (1932), but also includes reference, where necessary, to the participation of France and Russia/Soviet Union.

The colonial carve-up begins: The Sykes-Picot Treaty, 1916

The Ottoman Empire, in decline throughout most of the nineteenth century, completely disintegrated in the wake of its defeat in World War One. Its collapse opened the way for the victorious European states to partition its former territories amongst themselves. Indeed, preparation for this colonial carve-up began *before* the end of the war; early evidence of Allied confidence in the Ottoman defeat. The beginning was marked by the Sykes-Picot Treaty², negotiated and signed in secret by the *Entente* powers of Britain, France, and Russia in September 1916. The confidential agreement

planned to divide the former Ottoman territories into separate spheres of direct British, French, and Russian control, with adjoining territories over which these three Allies were to have lesser, but still substantial, political influence (Map 5:1). Ahmad (1994:186) comments that Sykes-Picot was “one of the most important imperialist treaties in the history of secret diplomacy”.

Map 5:1 The Sykes-Picot Treaty 1916



Source: McDowall 1996:116.

Map 5:1 demonstrates that the Sykes-Picot Treaty would divide the Kurds and Kurdistan into the ‘control’ and ‘spheres of influence’ of France and Russia and the state of Persia. The pre-existing boundary between the Ottoman Empire and Persia was maintained, thus assigning eastern Kurdistan to Tehran’s sovereignty. Although an historic opponent of Constantinople, Persia had remained neutral during the war and for this reason the Allied powers embedded the inviolability of Persia’s western border (McDowall 1996:117). This respect is highlighted in Map 5:1, with the Sykes-Picot

Treaty not applying to any territory east of the Persian boundary. Meanwhile, France was to preside over western, central, and southern Kurdistan, while Russia gained suzerainty over northern and central Kurdistan. Given Britain's influence over Kurdistan after the war, it is ironic that the Sykes-Picot Treaty did not allow for any British influence, direct or indirect, in this region.

Before the secret agreement could be implemented, however, it was circumvented in November 1917 by the new Bolshevik regime in Moscow. Lenin's October Revolutionaries unilaterally unveiled the Treaty and claimed that they were not bound to an agreement signed by Czarist Russia. McDowall (1996:115) explains that the Bolsheviks "wanted nothing of such imperialist schemes, except to expose them to the light of day". With Moscow's withdrawal and its cover blown, the Sykes-Picot Treaty was under serious threat as the basis for post-war cooperation between the two remaining *Entente* powers, Britain and France.

Not that the Kurds, who became aware of the Treaty's existence only after its exposure, would have lamented its passing. Although Sykes-Picot was intended as a basis for determining which colonial powers would assist what indigenous peoples in their transition to statehood, the fact that the Kurds were to be partitioned three ways did not augur well for Kurdish unity and independence.

Britain and France made an immediate attempt to rework the Sykes-Picot Treaty, by transferring the territory destined for Russian hands to Britain. No improvement here for the Kurds, as they would still be under the three-way influence of Britain, France, and Persia. This modified Sykes-Picot Treaty would not, however, last long either. Its final demise resulted from Britain's determination to seize full control of the Mosul *vilayet* (province), a region in southern central Kurdistan (see Map 5:1). Under Sykes-Picot the Mosul *vilayet* was to be divided in two, the western half to be controlled by France and the eastern half by Britain. For Britain to acquire the whole *vilayet*, therefore, London would have to persuade, cajole, or otherwise coerce Paris into relinquishing its half of the Mosul *vilayet*.

Britain's interest in the Mosul *vilayet* was a strong geopolitical one, indeed a theme that has come to characterise modern Middle East politics: Oil. At the time the

largest known oil deposits were located in the Mosul *vilayet*, and with a Royal Navy recently converted from steam to diesel power Britain was determined to secure control of this valuable prize. Britain's individual geopolitical considerations consequently overrode diplomatic niceties, London renounced the Sykes-Picot Treaty, which was "pushed aside and Britain got its way" (O'Ballance 1996:19).

The ultimate downfall of the Sykes-Picot Treaty meant that, when Ottoman forces surrendered to Britain on 30 October 1918, at Mudros on the island of Lemnos in the Aegean Sea, there was no agreement guiding the post-war colonial carve-up of the former Ottoman Empire. It was in this power vacuum, when the political map of the Middle East was yet to be drawn, that the possibility of an independent Kurdish state was greatest.

An independent Kurdistan?

Although the United States was only a small player in the Middle East, President Woodrow Wilson was a source of great hope for the Kurds. In January 1919 Wilson announced his Fourteen Points for World Peace, the man and his plans becoming instrumental in the establishment of the League of Nations, the first 'international' organisation of its kind. For the Kurds, Wilson's Twelfth Point (Quoted in McDowall 1996:115; emphasis added) provided an unprecedented opportunity to secure collective sovereignty, because it asserted that

"The Turkish portions of the present Ottoman Empire should be assured a secure sovereignty, but other nationalities (primarily the Kurds and Armenians) which are now under Turkish rule should be assured an undoubted security of life and *an absolutely unmolested opportunity of autonomous development*".

Moreover, and in particular, the actions of Britain, the major colonial presence in the Middle East, provided much encouragement to the Kurds. Although Britain's primary concern was Mesopotamia (now central and southern Iraq), its acquisition of the whole Mosul *vilayet* (now part of northern Iraq) meant that "it was drawn inexorably into consideration of (neighbouring) Kurdistan's fate....(Britain) immediately recognised that the peace and prosperity of northern Mesopotamia (including the Mosul *vilayet*) would depend directly on what happened north of the border (in Kurdistan)" (McDowall 1996:117 - 18).

In fact, London had realised Kurdistan's new importance before the end of the war. On 22 October 1918, for example, Arnold Toynbee of the Foreign Office had suggested (Quoted in McDowall 1996:118; emphasis added) to Sir Mark Sykes, the British architect of the Sykes-Picot Treaty, that

"If there is to be an individual Mesopotamia under Arab government with British administrative assistance, *the natural corollary would be an autonomous Kurdistan*, likewise assisted by His Majesty's Government....Such a Kurdistan would include not merely the country south of the Lesser Zab, but Rowanduz, Hakkari, and Bohtan districts up to the line....of the Armenian frontier".

Sykes, however, was unconvinced and preferred instead a Kurdish-Armenian state from the Black Sea down to Siirt (fifty kilometres south of Lake Van) and Urfa (just north of the Turkish - Syria border and eighty kilometres east of the Euphrates River), and an autonomous Southern Kurdistan running from Siirt to Urmia (ten kilometres west of Lake Urmia) and down to Mahabad³, but excluding Mosul *vilayet*, Arbil, and Kirkuk (McDowall 1996:118). Whatever the precise boundaries were to be, it was already clear, even at this early stage, that the Kurds were unlikely to be united in a true nation-state of Kurdistan; one way or another they would be divided. The positive aspect, however, was that in 1919 the British seemed set on establishing at least some type of Kurdish autonomous region, with the possibility of statehood to follow.

So it was that the British sought an agreement with the Kurds, whereby London would bestow political autonomy, perhaps even independence, upon the Kurds, in return for the Kurds securing the frontier regions around Mosul *vilayet*. With this motivation British political officers began a search for a single dominant Kurdish leader with whom they could negotiate and conclude a formal partnership. That man was Shaykh Mahmoud Barzinji, incumbent governor of Sulaymaniya *vilayet* and both an *agha* and *shaykh*, a man of "considerable spiritual and temporal standing" (O'Ballance 1996:19). An arrangement between Britain and Barzinji was duly worked out, in which Barzanji was given an increased area to govern. But, as mentioned in Chapter Four, this expansion brought Barzinji into conflict with other Kurdish leaders, and when he questioned British authority later in 1919 he was removed into exile in India.

Despite Barzinji's insolence, the Kurds did not forfeit British support for their autonomy or independence. In fact, in August the following year Britain made its strongest commitment yet to establishing a *de jure* Kurdish homeland. This assurance provides substantial evidence that London recognised the Kurds as a political community and, as such, as an important player in the geopolitics of colonialism.

Making promises: The Treaty of Sevres, 1920

The Paris Peace Conference, which lasted over a year from January 1919 to January 1920, concluded (eventually) the post-war settlements not only for Europe but also for the Middle East. The Kurds were represented at the meeting by one Sharif Pasha. Given the deep tribal divisions then characteristic of Kurdish nation(alism), however, it is impossible to conceive of this one man representing a single, unified Kurdish position. Indeed, there were already some serious political divisions emerging between the Kurdish tribes, especially with regard to which colonial power, Britain or France, would best serve their interests. Nevertheless, Sharif Pasha conveyed just such a message of Kurdish unity to the Peace Conference, claiming that Kurdistan was an "indivisible whole" and invoked the Kurds' right to self-determination in an "independent Kurdistan" (McDowall 1996:133, 131).

Although the British were certainly aware of the Kurds' internal disagreements, there was much optimism that the Kurds would soon be able to overcome their differences, establish an autonomous region with foreign assistance, and eventually emerge as an independent state. This positive thinking was codified in the Treaty of Sevres, one of the many products of the Paris Peace Conference. This document was signed on 10 August 1920 in the city near Paris of the same name, between the main Allied partners and the Ottoman government, now presiding over the remnants of the former Empire known as Turkey. For the Kurds, the most important of the Treaty's 433 articles was, and still is, the often quoted (eg, Entessar 1992:51; Ahmad 1994:203; McDowall 1996:450 - 51; O'Ballance 1996:13; emphasis added) Article 64, which promised that

³ It is interesting to note that after the demise of the Sykes-Picot Treaty Persia's western boundary was no longer regarded by Britain as inviolate, with the cities of Urmia and Mahabad both located across the border.

"If within one year from the coming into force of the present Treaty the Kurdish peoples within the areas defined in Article 62⁴ shall address themselves to the Council of the League of Nations in such a manner as to show that *a majority of the population of these areas desires independence from Turkey*, and if the Council then considers that these peoples are capable of such independence and recommends that it should be granted to them, *Turkey hereby agrees to execute such a recommendation, and to renounce all rights and title over these areas.*

The detailed provisions for such renunciation will form the subject of a separate agreement between the Principal Allied Powers and Turkey.

If and when such renunciation takes place, *no objection* will be raised by the Principal Allied Powers to the voluntary adhesion to such *an independent Kurdish State* of the Kurds inhabiting that part of Kurdistan which has hitherto been included in the Mosul *vilayet*".

Back in the Middle East a new drama was unfolding. The lead actor was the incredible, phoenix-like figure of Mustafa Kemal, who arose out of the ashes of the Ottoman Empire. This Turkish General, who had led Ottoman forces against the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZACs) at Gallipoli, was to almost single-handedly change the course of events in the Middle East, and especially for the Kurds. Mustafa Kemal, whose achievements earned him the additional name 'Ataturk', literally meaning 'the Great Turk', vehemently rejected continued Ottoman governance of Turkey and its acceptance of what Kemal perceived as unjust peace settlements. Appealing for Muslim unity in the face of Christian onslaught, Kemal rallied Turkish forces and was able to assert *his* authority throughout much of Turkey outside the Ottoman capital of Istanbul. In particular, Kemal's forces were able to reclaim the predominantly Kurdish *vilayets* of eastern Anatolia. The Kurds, as Muslims themselves, were initially supportive of Kemal, but as illustrated in Chapter Four this working relationship was shattered when Kemal later abolished the religious posts of Sultan and Caliph and pursued secular policies.

Because the Ottoman government had 'represented' Turkey at the Paris Peace Conference, Mustafa Kemal regarded the Treaty of Sevres as "a dead letter from the moment it was signed" (Ahmad 1994:204). For the Treaty was not only signed by an illegitimate government, but greatly reduced Turkey in size (see, for illustration, the

⁴ Article 62 defined 'Kurdistan' as "the predominantly Kurdish areas lying east of the Euphrates, south of the southern boundary of Armenia....and north of the frontier of Turkey with Syria and Mesopotamia" (Ahmad 1994:203; McDowall 1996:450).

Turkey envisioned by the Sykes-Picot Treaty in Map 5:1) and therefore seriously undermined its territorial viability. Both factors were equally abhorrent to Kemal, hence his dual mission to overthrow the Ottoman government and expand Turkey's territory. Mustafa Kemal's rapid progress towards achieving these twin objectives meant that "holes were blown in the Treaty of Sevres" (O'Ballance 1996:14).

Even without the powerful force that was Mustafa Kemal, it is unlikely that the Treaty of Sevres would have survived unscathed from wider geopolitical events. For example, only one of the fourteen states party to the Treaty⁵ ever ratified it, and when Italy did so "it quickly disowned it and declared itself unready to send 'one soldier' to the former Ottoman regions in order to implement its articles" (Ahmad 1994:205). Moreover, on 10 August 1920, ironically the very day that the Treaty of Sevres was signed, Britain, France, and Italy finalised a tripartite agreement whereby northern Kurdistan was to be divided into respective areas of influence.

All these factors led the Allies to renegotiate the Treaty of Sevres; not with the Ottoman 'government' in Istanbul but with Mustafa Kemal, whose *de facto* government had established itself in Ankara. The Kurds, previously an important part of the post-war geopolitical landscape, were slowly but surely being pushed aside in the growing power contest between London and Mustafa Kemal.

Breaking promises: The Treaty of Lausanne, 1923

The renegotiation process began in London in February 1921, with a meeting between all those party to the now effectively defunct Treaty of Sevres. For the delegates realised that to enforce the Treaty, particularly the clauses allowing for Kurdish autonomy with the option of independence, the Allies would have to deploy a substantial military force to remove Kemal from Kurdish Anatolia and parts of Kurdistan. Such a prospect was unpalatable to Western governments, especially France, Greece, and Italy who, when attempting to unilaterally enforce territorial awards made by the Sykes-Picot Treaty, had all suffered defeats at the hands of Kemal *since* the 1918 Armistice. Britain, who perhaps had the capacity to control Kemal, was similarly reluctant to become involved militarily; the cost of reversing the post-World War One demobilisation being

particularly prohibitive. Moreover, O'Ballance (1996:14) intriguingly⁶ notes that Britain, France, and a new player in the Middle East, the United States⁷, were cautious of

“a new, major, and dangerous enemy rising in the east from the ashes of Czarist Russia - the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics and the threat of world communism. The Western Allies had a change of heart and began to see Kemal as a possible south-eastern bastion against this new communist threat”.

For the Kurds of Turkey occupied Anatolia and Kurdistan, Allied refusal to respond militarily to Kemal meant that it was increasingly likely that they would be subject to Ankara's suzerainty. Given Kemal's relentless drive for Muslim unity, therefore, it was unlikely, indeed improbable, that the Kurds would be able to fulfil the requirements set out in the Treaty of Sevres.

This pessimistic outlook for the Kurds was blackened further by Britain, who for its own reasons wanted out of the Sevres commitment. Foremost amongst these was, once again, the status of the Mosul *vilayet* and the enormous geopolitical value of its oil deposits. Under the existing arrangements the Mosul *vilayet* could be added to an independent state in greater Kurdistan. Entessar (1992:52) neatly describes Britain's consequent reasoning on this critical issue:

“The British were aware of the existence of oil in Kirkuk and other cities in the Mosul *vilayet*....By incorporating the area into their client state of Iraq, as opposed to allowing the establishment of an independent and unpredictable Kurdish state, they would have a more secure grip on the area's oil reserves”.

With the Kurds unable to force their own claims on the ground, with no representation in London, and with no other delegate prepared to negotiate on their behalf, the Sevres Treaty partners were able to eliminate Articles 62 - 64, the very

⁵ The fourteen states that signed the Treaty of Sevres were Armenia, Belgium, Britain, Czechoslovakia, France, Greece, Hijaz, Italy, Japan, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Yugoslavia, and, of course, the Ottoman Empire (Ahmad 1994:202).

⁶ I say 'intriguingly' because this quote so closely resembles the geopolitics of the Cold War and the Western policy of containment of the Soviet Union, discussed later in this chapter. Yet this was a global geopolitical discourse that, in conventional understanding, did not begin until after the Second World War. This quote, therefore, is provocatively suggestive of an extended writing on the geopolitics of containment. But it must also be noted that O'Ballance (1996), in making this claim, presents no evidence in support of this assertion.

⁷ The United States entered the politics of the Middle East soon after the Armistice through its interest in protecting and guiding to statehood the Christian Armenians. This American interest did not last long, however, and it turned down a League of Nations offer to be the mandate power for Armenia. Ironically, soon after, in 1920, Armenia joined the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

clauses that referred to the Kurds and Kurdistan. Ahmad (1994:205) succinctly summarises the dire consequence of the Articles' omission: "With the need to mention these articles gone, the Kurds were dismissed altogether from the game".

Britain's volte-face from supporting Kurdish independence in the Treaty of Sevres to the complete removal of the Kurds from the political agenda is exemplified in a 1930 memorandum to the League of Nations, which claimed that

"On political grounds the conception (of Kurdish independence) is almost fantastic. Although they possess many sterling qualities, the Kurds of Iraq are entirely lacking in those characteristics of political cohesion which are essential to self-government. Their organisation and outlook are essentially tribal. They are without traditions of self-government of self-governing institutions. Their mode of life is primitive, and for the most part they are illiterate and untutored, resentful of authority and lacking in discipline or responsibility".

The promises made to the Kurds at Sevres were emphatically broken by the signing of a replacement agreement on 24 July 1923. The Treaty of Lausanne was an unmitigated disaster for the Kurds: Not one of the new Treaty's 143 articles made any reference to the Kurds or Kurdistan; northern Kurdistan was incorporated into Mustafa Kemal's new Republic of Turkey⁸; and, as a consequence, the Kurds were now well and truly divided between Persia, 'British' Iraq, 'French' Syria, and Turkey. The Kurds were written out of the political map of the Middle East (Map 5.2). For a combination of reasons, therefore, the Kurds missed out on what was undoubtedly their best opportunity achieve outright statehood.

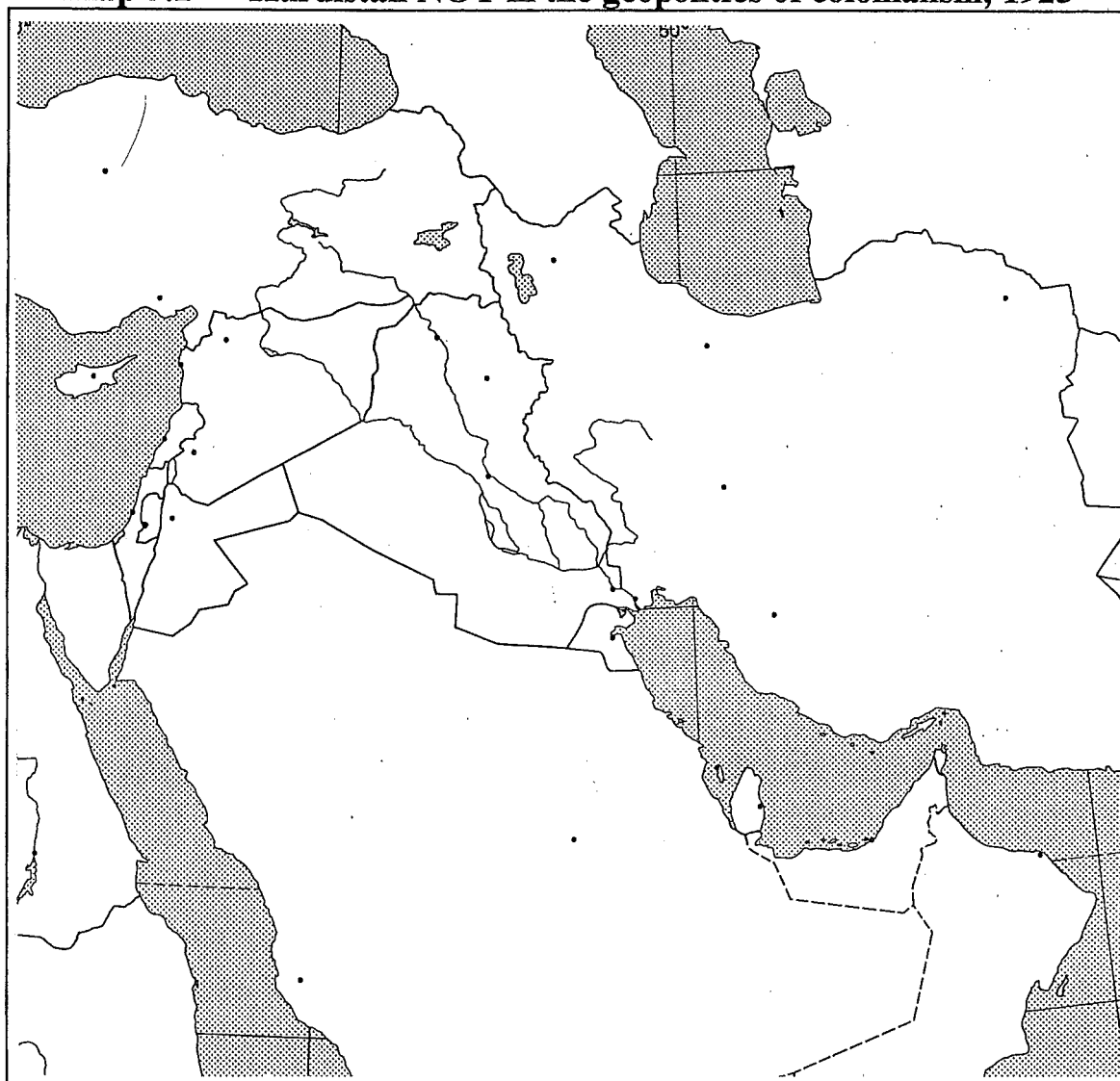
O'Ballance laments the Allies' collective dropping of the Kurdish issue, claiming "the cause of the Kurds was abandoned and they were sold down the river". Likewise Bulloch and Morris (1992:73 - 97), who refer to the entire episode as nothing less than "The Great Betrayal".

While from a moral standpoint Britain's actions are perhaps unpalatable, they can be explained by emphasising that at the time of the colonial carve-up Kurdish nation(alism) was not sufficiently strong for the Kurds to force, politically or militarily, their claims to independence (see Chapter Four). Viewed in this light it is little wonder

⁸ In its present geographical form.

that Britain chose, when its own hand was forced by Mustafa Kemal, to draw the Kurds out of the political map of the Middle East. Nevertheless, this section has demonstrated that the Kurds were a vital consideration in the geopolitics of colonialism: An implicit recognition of the Kurds as a political community; but one that was ultimately expendable in Britain's wider view of the world.

Map 5:2 Kurdistan NOT in the geopolitics of colonialism, 1923



Source: BYU 1991.

As the Kurds were eventually written out of the colonial cartograph, therefore, they should have been dismissed once and for all from the 'international' relations agenda, particularly at the global scale, and assigned merely to the domestic politics of Iran, Iraq, and Turkey. Rather ironically, however, the Kurds were to remain a factor until, and indeed during, World War Two: The denial of Kurdish aspirations merely proved to be a major catalyst for a growing nationalist sentiment. This feeling was

expressed, as we saw in Chapter Four, in the many rebellions of the 1930s which precipitated foreign (British) involvement. The Kurds were determined to achieve self-determination, and as such they would undoubtedly remain an item on the global geopolitical agenda and not, therefore, be pushed outside 'international' relations.

The Kurds in the Cold War, 1945 - 91

I mentioned above that as early as the 1920s the United States, Britain, and France perceived the Soviet Union as a "new, major, and dangerous threat" (O'Ballance 1996:14). Mostly latent throughout the 1920's and '30s and notwithstanding the four powers' victorious alliance during World War Two, this antagonism rapidly became overt in the immediate post-war aftermath. The new political hostility between the 'West' - headed by the US and with its West European allies as loyal lieutenants - and the 'East' - led by the Soviet Union and supported by its East European satellites - established and indeed came to define the world order that became known as the Cold War⁹ which persisted for the next four and a half decades. It is an exercise in futility to attempt to 'define' the Cold War in a few introductory sentences to a section within a single chapter. But in order to fully appreciate the following discussion it is necessary to offer a conceptualisation of the Cold War world order as it affected the Kurds and Kurdistan. This framework is best constructed by outlining the Cold War geopolitical discourses of the US/Western Alliance and the Soviet Union/Eastern Bloc, respectively known as 'containment' and 'Sovietology'.

The strategy of containment drew heavily on Mackinder's (1904) 'Heartland' thesis, which argued that control of the Eurasian 'heartland' would enable control of the 'world island' - Europe, Asia, the Indo sub-continent, the Middle East, and Africa - which would lead to global dominance. As the heartland power the Soviet Union was thus perceived by the US and its allies to be in a strong position to assert itself as geopolitical hegemon, hence the threat of 'world communism'. The Heartland thesis was further developed, even before the end of World War Two, by Spykman's (1944) argument that the only way to prevent Soviet hegemony was to 'contain' communism to

⁹ The term 'cold war' was first coined by Walter Lippmann in 1947, and was used to contrast the developing US - Soviet political antagonism with the recent military 'hot war' with Germany (Taylor 1993:79).

the heartland and circumvent the expansion of Moscow's Socialist Empire. This 'containment' would only be achieved by surrounding and isolating the Soviet fortress; thus Spykman's concept of a 'Rimland' immediately adjacent to the Eastern Bloc and stretching from Central and Southern Europe, eastward into the Middle East and Central Asia, and still further east to Southeast and Far East Asia, and finally to Japan and Alaska.

By its own argument the Heartland - Rimland thesis also defined how the West would perceive, rightly or wrongly, Soviet actions in Rimland and/or world island states. That is, the containment strategy constructed its 'threatening other' as an inherently expansionist Empire whose moves into and beyond the Rimland needed to be countered by strong political and, if necessary, military responses. Soviet desire to penetrate the Rimland and achieve world hegemony was labelled 'Sovietology', and it was the West's containment of Sovietology that served to define the Cold War world order.

In this geopolitical doctrine the Kurds and Kurdistan occupied a highly strategic location along the very interface of the Soviet Union and the Rimland, and were thus prime targets for superpower intrigue. While considerable Soviet and American involvement in Kurdish politics throughout the Cold War was mediated by Moscow's and Washington's overriding interest in the *states* of the Middle East, especially (in the Kurdish context) Iran and Iraq. For this reason the following discussion examines the Kurds in the geopolitics of the Cold War via Soviet and/or American relations with Iran and Iraq. In this section I will again demonstrate that the Kurds and their cause were exploited by both superpowers for their own much broader geopolitical purposes.

The Soviet Union and the rise and fall of the Mahabad Republic, 1946

The Kurds' first contact with global geopolitics in the Cold War era came with the highly successful but shortlived Kurdish Republic of Mahabad, which rose and fell largely at the political whim of the Soviet Union. In order to fully understand this relationship, it is necessary to briefly examine the preceding events of World War Two which gave rise to the Republic.

Although Iran was officially neutral at the outbreak of the Second World War, the Allied powers began to suspect that Reza Shah Pahlavi had pro-German sympathies.

This prospect, for two reasons, was of particular concern to Britain and the Soviet Union. First, after Nazi Germany's invasion of the Soviet Union on 6 June 1941 Iran became a strategic supply route to the isolated and desperate USSR. If Iran came into the Nazi orbit this vital lifeline would be severed. Second, Hitler's drive towards the oilfields of the Caucasus in 1941/42 opened Allied eyes to the prospect that Iran's substantial oil reserves would be an enormous, indeed immeasurable, boost for the German advance. For these two reasons the Allies 'invaded' Iran in August 1942, with the Soviet Red Army occupying northern Iran and Britain installed in southern Iran. Reza Shah Pahlavi was forced to abdicate, and his son, Mohammed Reza Shah, was installed in power. This new government, however, was little more than a puppet and administered only over a small central zone between the Soviets and the British. In this zone lay most of Kurdistan in Iran, over which Tehran's control was less than negligible.

Ironically, yet entirely understandably, Moscow had its own designs on the Iranian oilfields. So during its occupation the Soviets actively encouraged Azeris living in the northern Iranian province of Azerbaijan to seek secession from Tehran and then, of course, to unify with the Soviet Republic of the same name lying immediately to the north. Given that Iranian Azerbaijan was adjacent to, even partially overlapping with, Kurdistan in Iran, Soviet intrigue in Azeri affairs could hardly go unnoticed by the Kurds. And it will be recalled from Chapter Four that it was at this time that the Kurds in Iran established their first modern political parties. Foremost amongst these was the Committee for the Resurrection of Kurdistan, or *Komala*, which not surprisingly "decided to rely on the Soviet Union in a marriage of convenience to further its cause of Kurdish autonomy" (Entessar 1992:17). That cause reached a pinnacle in January 1946 when, following the Azeri example of a month earlier, *Komala* and the newly formed Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran established an autonomous Republic of Mahabad.

While the Soviets were supportive of the Republic, they had been careful not to formally commit to its actual military defence. On the other hand, however, "the Mahabad Government expected the USSR to stand by them, (but) this was wishful thinking" (McDowall 1991:22). Moscow's reasoning for avoiding such an obligation flowed from its desire to secure a post-war oil concession from the Tehran government. By April 1946, as Entessar (1992:22) explains, negotiations over such a deal had reached a critical stage:

“In discussions with Iranian Prime Minister Ahmad Qavam, the Soviets promised to remove their troops from Iran in return for an oil concession in the northern oilfields. Prime Minister Qavam reminded the Soviets that the Iranian Parliament (*majlis*) had to approve an oil concession and that since the term of the Parliament had expired elections were needed to convene a new Parliament. However, parliamentary elections were not permissible under Iranian law so long as foreign troops were occupying part of the country. In an April 1946 agreement, the Soviet Union promised to remove its troops from Iranian territory....By 9 May 1946 the Soviets had withdrawn from Iran”.

It was only after the Soviet deterrent was removed that Tehran was free to move against the autonomous zone which, as we also saw in Chapter Four, disintegrated on 17 December 1946. Thus the rise and fall of the Kurdish Republic of Mahabad was attributable as much to the Soviet Union's changing geopolitical considerations as it was to the Kurds' own strengths and weaknesses discussed previously.

As explained in Chapter Four Kurdish political organisation was forced underground in the wake of Mahabad by brutal government suppression, not only in Iran but also in Iraq and Turkey. The remainder of the 1940s and the following decade, aptly described by Kendal (1993:62 - 8) as “the quiet years”, was indeed a period of covert nation(alism) in silent preparation for a better organised resistance to central authority. Thus the Kurds collectively faded not only from the Middle Eastern but also global geopolitical scene. The Kurds' return did not begin until the early 1960s.

Creating alliances: Superpowers, client states, and the Kurds, 1960 - 75

It is useful, indeed necessary, to survey the general geopolitical landscape as of the Kurds' re-entry into global geopolitics, circa 1960. To begin with, the United States was heavily allied to Mohammed Reza Shah's regime in Tehran, who feared its expansionist, superpower northern neighbour. Washington was also a major backer of Israel, as it had and has always been. Iran and Israel were both fearful of Iraq: Iran because Baghdad was its major rival in dominating the Persian Gulf; Israel because Baghdad was strongly pan-Arab and anti-Israeli. For these reasons Tel Aviv¹⁰ and Tehran, beginning in 1963, cooperated in providing substantial military and financial

¹⁰ The capital of Israel is a contestable decision. The Israeli government and people contend that Israel's 'true' and 'eternal' capital is the holy city of Jerusalem. The overwhelming majority of the international community, however, do not recognise this claim, and as most of Israel's

support to the two year old Kurdish Democratic Party's rebellion against the Arab government in Baghdad, so as to weaken their mutual archenemy from within. Although there existed some ties between Moscow and Baghdad at this time these were weak and certainly countered by the Soviet Union's longstanding relationship with Mullah Mustafa Barzani¹¹. The absence of an overt Soviet involvement in Iraq and the links between Barzani and Moscow - which meant that Barzani's consistent appeals for American help fell on deaf ears in Washington - had the important effect of preventing, until the very end of the decade, US involvement in Kurdistan.

This situation, however, changed dramatically in July 1968 with the military coup in Iraq that installed the Ba'ath Socialist Party as government. Given the new government's party title it is not hard to guess its political persuasion, and almost immediately the Moscow - Baghdad relationship began to flourish. With the spectre of Iraq falling into the communist orbit, Washington became interested in the KDP's rebellion. The first US initiated discussions with Barzani occurred in August 1969, at the very time the KDP was struggling to contain a strong Iraqi army offensive. These negotiations led to a secret agreement whereby the US would donate \$14 million to the Kurdish cause in Iraq. Twelve years after the event Ghareeb (1981:138 - 39) published the agreement's main points, which included:

- (1) The subject of United States aid to the KDP must be kept secret from all, including high ranking members within the Kurdish movement¹²;
- (2) The objective of the KDP insurgency was to overthrow the Ba'ath Socialist regime;
- (3) The KDP must not cause any harm to Iran, particularly by supporting the KDPI. In return, the Iranian government would not take any actions hostile to the Kurdish movement¹³;
- (4) The KDP would be closed to prospective communist members, and the KDP must not protect them;
- (5) All Soviet offers of aid to the KDP must be rejected and the United States immediately notified of such offers; and

diplomatic and government infrastructure is located in Tel Aviv, I regard this city as the capital of Israel.

¹¹ Remembering that Barzani had spent eleven years in exile in the Soviet Union following the demise of the Republic of Mahabad, during which time he made extensive contacts with the Soviet government and had adopted socialist political views (O'Ballance 1996).

¹² One can only wonder as to how the Americans expected Barzani to 'keep quiet' a cash injection of US\$14 million, with all the arms that this could buy, from even his own leadership!

¹³ It is unclear whether this means the 'Kurdish movement' in Iran, in Iraq, or in general. It seems improbable that the Shah would have agreed to the cessation of activities against the Kurds in Iran, so I can only suspect that this 'guarantee' refers to the Kurds of Iraq.

- (6) The United States government considers Barzani the man responsible for the KDP and would accept only his opinion.

The secrecy surrounding this agreement did not, however, last long and by the early 1970s it had become clear that the US, through its Central Intelligence Agency, was "heavily involved" (Entessar 1992:120) in supporting the KDP's rebellion. During the first half of 1972 the veil was further removed. In April the growing Baghdad - Moscow relationship was codified with the signing of an Iraqi - Soviet Treaty of Cooperation and Friendship. The following month US President Richard Nixon and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger met with the Shah, who evidently persuaded them to join Iran and Israel in further assisting the KDP. Nixon consequently ordered the CIA to covertly channel another \$16 million to Barzani (Vanly 1993:169).

From this increased support and the 1969 agreement Barzani believed the US was genuinely committed to a KDP victory and the dismemberment of the state of Iraq. Barzani even promised Washington exclusive access for US companies to Kurdistan's oilfields after a Kurdish secession (Entessar 1992:122). Not surprisingly Baghdad was becoming increasingly paranoid of a US-Iran-Israel conspiracy to destroy Iraq, which merely drove Baghdad further into the Soviet sphere, Moscow supplying large amounts of military hardware. But Barzani's faithful interpretation of US support was misplaced: Washington had no desire to facilitate a Kurdish victory, much less the break-up of the Iraqi state. Rather, the United States was hoping "to benefit from an unresolvable situation in which Iraq is intrinsically weakened by the Kurds' refusal to give up their semi-autonomy....The US would not like to see the situation resolved either way", but this "was not imparted to our clients (the Kurds), who were encouraged to continue fighting" (The Pike Commission Report to the House of Representatives 1976; Quoted in McDowall 1996:331 and Entessar 1992:122). That struggle continued, as we saw in Chapter Four, until Iran and Iraq signed the Algiers Agreement in March 1975, the Shah instantly ceasing all support for Barzani and the KDP's 14 year rebellion crashed to its disastrous end.

Thus once again the Kurds had been exploited by Middle Eastern and foreign governments for the latter's own geopolitical purposes. And with the collapse of their uprising in Iraq the Kurds' hopes of achieving national self-determination once again fell

foul of the changing global geopolitical vagaries of the Cold War. Once more the Kurds withdrew from the world stage, only to return again just four years later.

Changing alliances:

The Islamic Revolution and the Iran - Iraq war, 1979 - 88

The Islamic Revolution in Iran in January 1979 swept aside the hated regime of Mohammed Reza Shah, ended the 68-year Pahlavi dynasty, installed the Shi'a fundamentalist government of Ayatollah Khomeini, and established Iran as an Islamic Republic. These dramatic changes also had a profound effect outside the state, precipitating a major shift in Middle East, and indeed global, geopolitics. Through the United States' close association with the Shah's regime Khomeini and his cohorts incited intense anti-American ill-feeling in revolutionary Iran. This animosity culminated in the seizure of the American embassy and its staff in Tehran on 4 November 1979, which evolved into a 444-day hostage crisis that very nearly triggered a military confrontation between the US and Iran (Slim 1992:206). Almost overnight the Islamic Revolution had transformed Iran from a close US ally to an archenemy, an antipathy that continues to the present day.

Ten months into the hostage crisis Iraq, a Soviet client state whose Ba'ath Socialist regime had been destabilised by an American backed Kurdish Democratic Party during the 1970s, invaded Iran, starting the eight year Persian Gulf War. Baghdad's offensive gave the US an ideal counter to containing the new threat in the Middle East. The problem, however, was that Iraq, while not entrenched in the Soviet camp, was by no means a secure US ally. Indeed, formal diplomatic relations between Washington and Baghdad, severed after Iraq's role in the Arab - Israeli war of June 1967, had not been restored by 1980. But "the United States, still indignant at the 'loss' of Iran and hounded by the memory of the hostage crisis of 1979 - 80, was eager to help Iraq" (Entessar 1992:142).

Washington's first step in assisting Baghdad came in March 1982 with the decision to remove Iraq from its list of states suspected of sponsoring Arab terrorist organisations. It is perhaps no coincidence that at about the same time, as Iraq's position on the battlefield began to weaken, Iraqi President Saddam Hussein began to 'test the water' concerning possible US support for his war with Iran. That possibility was, of

course, extremely good, and from 1983 the US and other Western governments began to supply Baghdad with arms, cash, and export credits. Full US - Iraqi diplomatic relations were restored on 26 November 1984. But again, just as the US had done with the KDP in the early 1970s, Washington's policy was not to aid Iraq to victory over Iran, but for the war to reach an inconclusive end. In the words of Geoffrey Kemp, President Reagan's Middle East expert in his National Security Council: "It wasn't that we wanted Iraq to win the war, we did not want Iraq to lose"¹⁴ (Miller and Mylroie 1990:143).

For the KDP and the PUK, Washington's decision to back Iraq in the war was a double and ironic blow: It not only meant that US and Israeli support previously channelled through the Shah's Iran came to a halt, but also that they were now fighting against an Iraqi army armed and financed by the same two sponsors. On the other hand, US support for Baghdad clearly helped the KDPI, who received substantial assistance from the Ba'athist regime throughout the war. These contradictory changes in patron - client alliances were one cause of the open hostility between the KDP and the KDPI in the latter half of the war.

The role of the Soviet Union, or rather the lack of it, during this episode deserves special mention. In the first instance it is ironic, given the friendship between Moscow and Baghdad in the early 1970s, that the Soviets evidently allowed Saddam Hussein to switch allegiance to Washington. Without an extensive but unnecessary (in this context) discussion one can only speculate as to the reasons why Moscow acquiesced to this development. Soviet involvement in the Afghanistan war against the Muslim *mujaheddin* was probably one crucial factor in the cooling of relations between Moscow and Baghdad. But the new US - Iraq alliance did not, as perhaps would be expected, force the Soviet Union into a counter-balance with Iran, despite their mutual anti-American position. Again, one can only theorise as to why this did not happen, but certainly one stand-out, plausible explanation is the vital differences between Moscow and Tehran: Soviet atheism, or at least agnosticism, was anathema to fervent Iranian Islam.

¹⁴

It seems probable that Washington did not want Iraq to win the war because the disintegration of Iran would undoubtedly have arisen Soviet interest in filling the vacuum, and a Soviet invasion could very easily have escalated into a direct US - Soviet confrontation. On the other hand, the US was determined that Iran's fundamentalist Shi'a Islam would not be 'exported' around the Gulf, and spread to threaten its important ally, Israel.

The apparent absence of overt Soviet involvement in the Iran - Iraq war meant that it was, perhaps, removed a step from the direct superpower confrontation of the Cold War. Nevertheless, the KDPI at least continued to play a vital role for the United States and Israel in the 'containment' of Shi'a fundamentalist Iran. Washington and Tel Aviv had, therefore, effectively swapped Barzani's KDP for Ghassemlou's KDPI as their Kurdish client. The Kurds, once more, were being exploited for the geopolitical purposes of foreign powers, and were not supported for the Kurds' own cause. Clear empirical evidence, I suggest, of state-centric 'international' relations with a contradictory recognition of the differences between nation and state. That even those involved in practical 'international' relations recognise, although perhaps unwittingly, the mismatch between nation and state is highly ironic: One would imagine that it would be *formal* international relations people would be in a position to emphasise this crucial point.

This situation, of course, rendered the Kurds extremely vulnerable to the political whims of Middle Eastern and foreign governments. "Nothing more clearly illustrates this vulnerability", writes McDowall (1996:361), "than the international failure to take any substantive measure to restrain Iraq from its chemical weapons attacks (against the Kurds)". As we saw in Chapter Four this horrific new development began in April 1987, continued until late 1988, and killed countless thousands. Although these attacks were in clear violation of the 1925 Geneva Protocol banning the use of chemical weapons and other instruments of international law, Western governments, especially the US and Britain, responded belatedly and even then with only weak diplomatic statements.

Washington and London avoided the outright condemnation of Baghdad by claiming that there was no "conclusive evidence" (Entessar 1992:144) that the Ba'athists had committed the alleged atrocities. This attempted exoneration, however, was a scarcely plausible facade that attempted to cover Western governments' real reasons for not responding to Iraq's brutal treatment of its Kurdish population. For the evidence of chemical attacks, including eyewitness accounts, the treatment of survivors in Europe, analysis of soil samples, appeals by the PUK to the United Nations, and even the reports of the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee and a private Massachusetts based organisation, Physicians for Human Rights, was "overwhelming" and "incontestable" (McDowall 1991:45; 1996:361).

The real motives behind Western governments' "deafening silence" over the chemical attacks were strategic and economic. The West's massive support of Baghdad in the Persian Gulf War, through technology transfers, export credits, arms sales, and construction projects, meant that they had actively contributed to Iraq's chemical weapons programme (Burrows and Windrem 1995). The eventual deployment of those weapons was seen as a 'tolerable consequence', an acceptable price to pay for Baghdad's invaluable contribution in containing the Iranian threat. Moreover, by the time 5 000 Kurds were gassed to death at Halabja, Western governments were well aware that Iran was exhausted and the end of the war was nigh. With their collective eye on lucrative post-war reconstruction contracts that Baghdad was bound to offer, estimated at an astonishing \$50 000 million (McDowall 1996:362), Western governments were against any action that would jeopardise such valuable commercial interests. The only action of any substance was the passing of UN Security Council Resolution 620, which condemned Iraq's use of chemical weapons. The resolution, however, did not mention the Kurds as the victims and, as McDowall (1996:363) concludes, "it was clear that many states of the industrialised world...had little intention of curtailing their arms sales (and other strategic and economic interests) on account of either the UNSCR 620 or the 1925 Protocol".

So once again the Kurds suffered at the hands of Western geopolitical interests. Even in these most horrendous of circumstances the Kurds were seen as expendable, as sacrificial to the objectives of the 'international' community. On these grounds one must give considerable thought to the opinion expressed on 7 September 1988 in *The Guardian* (Quoted in McDowall 1996:362):

"You don't often find it, even *in extremis*, but morality still has a place in international relations. And sometimes the failure to speak out against the indefensible, drenched in shuffling hypocrisy, betrays a supine immorality all of its own".

Whatever the extent of the Kurds' presence in the world's conscience, they were soon displaced by the dramatic collapse of communist states across Eastern Europe, beginning in 1989, the rapid disintegration of the Soviet Union, and the end of the Cold War itself by the end of 1991. What would the coming of a new world order mean for the Kurds?

Perhaps, hopefully, the post-Cold War world would bring an end to the Kurds' exploitation by foreign powers for their own geopolitical purposes and a genuine interest in resolving the Kurds' plight. For this section has demonstrated that throughout the Cold War this scenario was their lot: Use by foreign governments to weaken whichever regime was currently perceived as a threat. Again, this demonstrates an implicit recognition of the Kurds as a nation that could act as an internal power sink to destabilise opposition states. Once more this belies the conventional conflation of nation and state and the division between 'international' relations and domestic politics.

The Kurds and the rogue state of Iraq, 1990 -

This section employs the new 'rogue state' doctrine to examine the Kurds in post-Cold War global scale geopolitics. The thesis is best represented in the writings of Michael Klare (1995a; 1995b), and essentially asserts that, with the demise of the Soviet Union and Washington's need to find another 'threatening other' to replace it, the United States identified a number of 'rogue states' as the new threat to global (read American) security. Foremost among such states are those accused of sponsoring 'international' terrorism, for example Iran and Libya, and those suspected of actively but covertly pursuing nuclear weapons status, such as Iraq and North Korea. The 'rogue state' doctrine, while certainly not beyond contention because it is (as yet) impossible to regard it as 'defining' the new world order, does provide a useful geopolitical framework with which to examine the Kurds at the global scale in the post-Cold War era.

The 'rogue state' doctrine is here applied to Iraq, for since the end of the Cold War it is Iraq that has achieved the dubious honour of being the quintessential 'rogue state'. Clearly, Iraq-as-rogue-state propels the Kurds of Iraq to the forefront of the Kurds role in 'international' politics from 1990. While the Kurds of Iraq have dominated at the global scale during this time, it is important to note - as I will where necessary during this section - that the Kurds of Iran and Turkey have also been affected. This interaction will demonstrate the interrelationships between global, Middle Eastern, and local politics.

The Gulf Crisis and War, August 1990 - February 1991

Iraq's first 'roguish' act came towards the very end of the Cold War, with its invasion of Kuwait on 2 August 1990. Baghdad 'legitimated' its attack on the grounds that Kuwait was Iraq's historical 'nineteenth province', and in retaliation to Kuwait City's refusal to slow oil production which would force oil prices up. Iraq desperately needed increased oil revenues to finance the reconstruction of its devastated infrastructure and economy in the wake of the eight year war with Iran. This essentially regional conflict assumed global crisis proportions through the 'rogue state' doctrine. For in March 1990, five months before the invasion,

"a team of five hundred (United States) military specialists began working....to develop a detailed blueprint for a US - Iraq war in the Kuwait - Saudi Arabia area. Known as Operations Plan 1002-90, the resulting document....covered every aspect of a future conflict. The plan 'spelled out which (US) divisions would go to Saudi Arabia, what frequencies they would use, where they would get their water, how they would treat their casualties, and how they would handle the news media" (Klare 1995a:36).

Thus Klare (1995b:625 - 26) claims, as the Pentagon itself admitted in 1992, that "before a single soldier entered Kuwait, the basic concepts of Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm were established".

Throughout the escalating diplomatic crisis which preceded the Gulf War, the Kurds attempted to present a united political face through the Independent Kurdistan Front (IKF). The policy was one of evenhandedness, the Kurds opting "for a position of neutrality in the dispute, condemning the (Iraqi) invasion though not actively supporting the allied response to it" (Bulloch and Morris 1992:8). This balanced stance resulted from two juxtaposed alternatives. On the one hand, this was perhaps an opportune time to negotiate a northern peace with Saddam, to leave Baghdad free to prepare for the increasingly likely conflict in the south. Moreover, given its relative military weakness and the dire warning of Saddam's deputy, Izzat Ibrahim, who told the Kurds "If you have forgotten Halabja, I would like to remind you that we are ready to repeat the operation" (Quoted in McDowall 1996:370), the IKF "did not want to give Saddam any excuse to launch a new wave of repression in the north on the grounds that the Kurds were siding with the enemy" (Bulloch and Morris 1992:8). But to deal with Saddam now, of course, would align the Kurds with Baghdad at the very moment Iraq was being cast as an international pariah, and would consequently endanger any coalition support

that may be forthcoming. On the other hand, however, the IKF knew that “nothing could be more dangerous than for the Kurds openly to side with the US led coalition....they longed for Saddam’s discomfiture but feared open association with the West” (McDowall 1996:369). The Kurds, it seems, had learnt from their previous experiences of Western betrayal.

With the outbreak of war on 17 January 1991 and the growing realisation of Iraq’s imminent defeat, the coalition and especially the US began to consider what a post-war Iraq might look like. It was clear that the coalition was committed to the state’s territorial integrity. For the disintegration of Iraq would undoubtedly involve a lengthy commitment of coalition forces, certainly far longer than the Gulf War deployment. Moreover, a power vacuum in Iraq would merely encourage Iran to seize the southern Shi’a Arab regions and the highly contested Shatt al-Arab waterway; a possibility of special concern to Washington, the US particularly fearful of increased Iranian influence in the Gulf. Similarly, Turkey would undoubtedly be tempted to repossess the oil rich Mosul *vilayet* which it had begrudgingly conceded to Britain in 1925. The Kurds would be but another complicating factor in any remapping of state boundaries. But while the coalition was committed to Iraq’s continued existence, it was also obvious that the US, in particular, desired the removal of Saddam Hussein.

Hence on 15 February, still a fortnight before the Gulf War ceasefire on 28 February, President Bush (Quoted in Mayall 1991:428) asserted that

“There’s another way for the bloodshed to stop, and that is for the Iraqi military and the Iraqi people to take matters into their own hands to force Saddam Hussein, the dictator, to step aside, and to comply with the United Nations and then rejoin the family of peace loving nations”.

This message and others like it were repeatedly broadcast into Iraq, in both Arabic and Kurdish, by the Voice of America and the Voice of Free Iraq, an Iraqi-opposition-in-exile radio operating out of Jedda, Saudi Arabia, and sponsored (at least at this time) by the US CIA (Entessar 1992:146; McDowall 1996:373).

Moreover, an IKF delegation had met with representatives of the British Foreign Office in London, and PUK leader Jalal Talabani was in Washington when the ceasefire came, attempting to met State Department officials. The Americans, however, were not

as receptive as the British, and Talabani was refused permission to visit the State Department itself. Despite this diplomatic snub the IKF was optimistic of Western support for an uprising, and thus the political leadership “began to drop the cautious guard they had adopted throughout the crisis and started to plan for the final showdown with Saddam” (Bulloch and Morris 1992:12).

The Kurdish rebellion and refugee crisis, March - April 1991

Events within Kurdistan in Iraq, however, were moving much faster than the IKF. Inspired by the apparent propitiousness of the moment, with a defeated and vulnerable government in Baghdad and perceived coalition support, the Kurds began their latest nationalist rebellion. But this uprising was unlike their countless others of the past one hundred and more years; for it was initiated not by tribal *aghas* or *shaykhs*, nor by leaders of modern political parties, but by the general population itself. As KDP leader Massoud Barzani himself admitted, “The uprising came from the people themselves, we did not expect it”. Another spokesman similarly conceded that the IKF “merely followed the people onto the streets” (McDowall 1996:371). Indeed, O’Ballance (1996:185) summarises the rebellion as a “spontaneous outbreak of insurgency, which took Kurdish political leaders by surprise. As they were unable to stem it, they made capital, joined in, and swam with the insurgent tide”. Undoubtedly this rebellion was clear evidence of a truly popular Kurdish nation(alism).

The uprising began in the small town of Raniya on 4 March, when the civilian population, led by only a small number of *peshmerga*, attacked the Ba’ath Party’s headquarters and seized control. From here the rebellion spread like wildfire. Within a fortnight the Kurds commanded more than 75 percent of Kurdistan in Iraq (Karadaghi 1993:230), including major cities such as Arbil, Dohuk, Sulaymaniya, and Zakho.

On 21 March *peshmerga* forces captured the oil rich city of Kirkuk, a highly symbolic event for two reasons. First, this was the first time in seventy years of almost continuous rebellion against Baghdad that the Kurds had gained full control of this vital city. Second, the fall of Kirkuk coincided with the New Ruz festival that welcomes the Kurdish new year; an entirely appropriate timing, for the successes of the rebellion itself seemed to be ushering in a new dawn of Kurdish nationalism. That image became even more real when the Kurds of the pro-government Kurdish Popular Army - previously

ridiculed by the anti-Saddam Kurds, who called them *jash*, or 'little donkeys' - "defected almost to a man" (O'Ballance 1996:185), contributed greatly to the continuation of the revolt's momentum, and "were thus transformed from embarrassed collaborators with Baghdad into champions of the uprising" (McDowall 1996:371). Bulloch and Morris (1992:2) capture the poignancy of the moment: "(The Kurds) forgot the mournful adage which has so accurately reflected their plight: 'The Kurds have no friends but the mountains'".

Kurdish euphoria, however, was to be shortlived. Baghdad's elite Republican Guard had escaped the rout in Kuwait, and on 28 March began a vicious counterattack using assault helicopters, tanks, and heavy artillery. The lightly armed, predominantly civilian (and therefore with minimal training and experience), and poorly organised *peshmerga* stood little chance against the Arab onslaught. The brutality of the offensive was extreme, but certainly not unprecedented: Once again the Kurds were subject to massive bombardment, wholesale destruction of villages and towns, large scale and arbitrary arrest, detention, deportation, torture, and murder. Estimates of the number of Kurds, civilian and *peshmerga* alike, killed in Saddam's retribution range from 20 000 (McDowall 1996:373) to 30 000 (O Tuathail 1993:28).

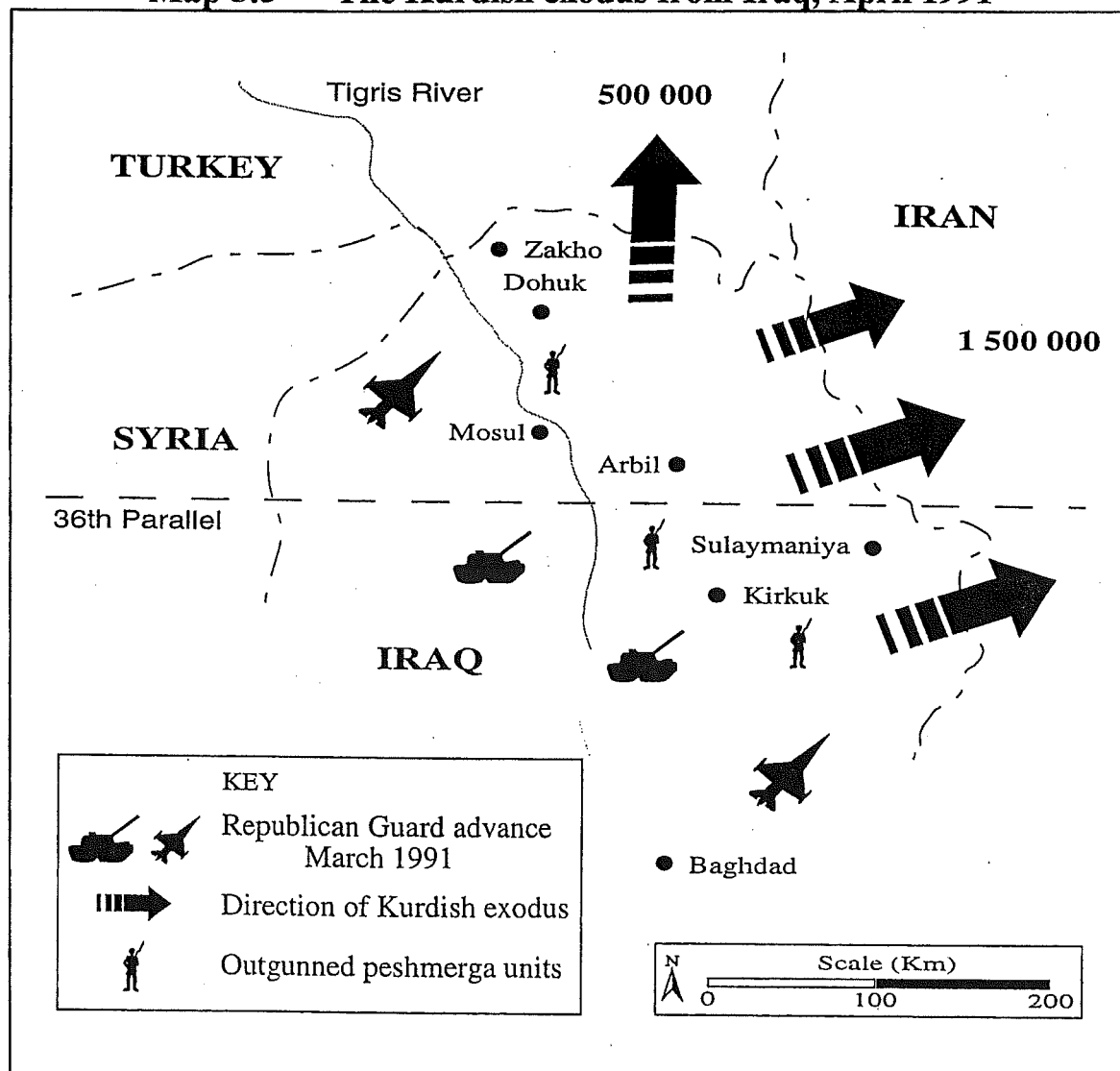
In the face of such severe tactics many *peshmerga* chose not to fight but to flee with their families ahead of the Republican Guard's advance. Even the city of Kirkuk, the Kurds' "biggest prize", was given up without much of a fight: In fact, Kirkuk fell to government forces at the end of the third day of Baghdad's counterattack, "after little more than a week in rebel hands" (Bulloch and Morris 1992:1). Other major cities and towns throughout Kurdistan in Iraq were also quickly recaptured, and the Kurdish rebellion collapsed, almost without resistance (O'Ballance 1996:187).

Realising they were now defenceless against a merciless Iraqi war machine, with the memory of Halabja still fresh in their minds, and Izzat Ibrahim's warning ringing in their ears, panic stricken Kurds fled their homes in a "mad stampede" (McDowall 1996:373) towards the relative safety of Iran and Turkey. Although the Kurds' intense fear of renewed chemical weapons warfare was not realised, two million Kurds (Entessar 1992:146; Karadaghi 1993:230; Van Hear 1993:69; see Map 5:3), nearly half the Kurdish population of Iraq, undertook the exceedingly dangerous journey through the

snow covered mountains of Kurdistan. For even though *peshmerga* forces were routed and the population was on the run, Baghdad relentlessly pursued the Kurds:

“On the road to Turkey one journalist said he had seen nearly 500 fugitives killed by phosphorous bombs dropped from helicopters: ‘People are burned to death inside cars. Iraqi helicopters are bombing civilians without let up’. Similar scenes occurred on the roads to Iran” (McDowall 1996:373).

Map 5:3 The Kurdish exodus from Iraq, April 1991



Source: *The Economist* April - May 1991 and Buckley 1994:9.

For those Kurds that managed to avoid Iraqi air strikes there was a second deadly danger. With mountain roads and tracks congested with refugees, progress all but ground to a halt. The desolate Kurds, completely unprepared for the freezing cold, bitter winds, and the rain, sleet, and snow, were forced to camp along roadsides and on bare mountain slopes. The exposed Kurds suffered terribly, especially the young and the old among them.

Estimates on the number of deaths *per day* varied from a seemingly conservative 1 000 (Buckley 1994:11) to an horrific 3 000 (Van Hear 1993:69). Whatever the exact figure, there was no doubt that the Kurdish refugee problem was becoming an unmitigated humanitarian disaster: A crisis superlatively described as “a refugee problem unlike anything we’ve seen yet” (Coser 1991:322) and “a wretched plight” (*The Economist* 20 April 1991:12).

Operation Provide Comfort

The coalition’s complicity in inspiring the rebellion meant that they were at best partially and at worst wholly responsible for the Kurds’ desperate situation as of late March 1991. Coalition governments, however, were steadfast in their refusal to intervene militarily on behalf of the Kurds. (Howe 1991:325; Entessar 1992:152). Washington and London, reaffirming their commitment to the territorial integrity of Iraq, claimed that the confrontation between the Kurds and Baghdad was a ‘civil war’; as such it was an event completely under Iraq’s domestic jurisdiction and not within the purview of ‘international’ law (Shaw 1991:719 - 20). British Prime Minister John Major, for example, declared that “What is going on in Iraq is disturbing and malignant. But it is also within the borders of Iraq and we have no international authority to interfere”. Similarly, on 5 April President Bush asserted that “American lives are too precious for us to be sucked into a civil war” (Bulloch and Morris 1992:30). Three days later Secretary of State James Baker reiterated the words of his President, insisting that that the US was “not prepared to go down the slippery slope of being sucked into a civil war” (*The Economist* 13 April 1991:43). Thus in early April 1991, as the Republican Guard inflicted a terrible punishment on the Kurds, precipitating “one of the biggest and fastest human migrations that has ever taken place” (Buckley 1994:11), the coalition was prepared to leave them to fend for themselves.

But these governments faced a rising tide of public concern from their own domestic constituencies, which thought otherwise. Live on-the-spot television coverage of the unfolding Kurdish crisis portrayed the full horror of Baghdad’s revenge: Harrowing images of harassed, homeless, and hungry Kurds camping on freezing, windswept, and wet mountainsides (Gowing 1991:111). Sympathetic Western audiences were outraged at their governments’ attempts to wash their hands of the growing

tragedy and abandon the Kurds to their fate. In Britain *The Independent* newspaper epitomised public condemnation of the coalition's betrayal of the Kurds:

"Mr Major, to his shame, says he cannot recall asking (the Kurds) 'to mount this particular insurrection', as though the revolt were a freakish event which had nothing to do with us....The man (President Bush) who reportedly told the Central Intelligence Agency in January to provoke the Kurds into insurrection and preached rebellion during the Gulf War now acts like someone with a nasty bout of amnesia" (Quoted in McDowall 1996:373).

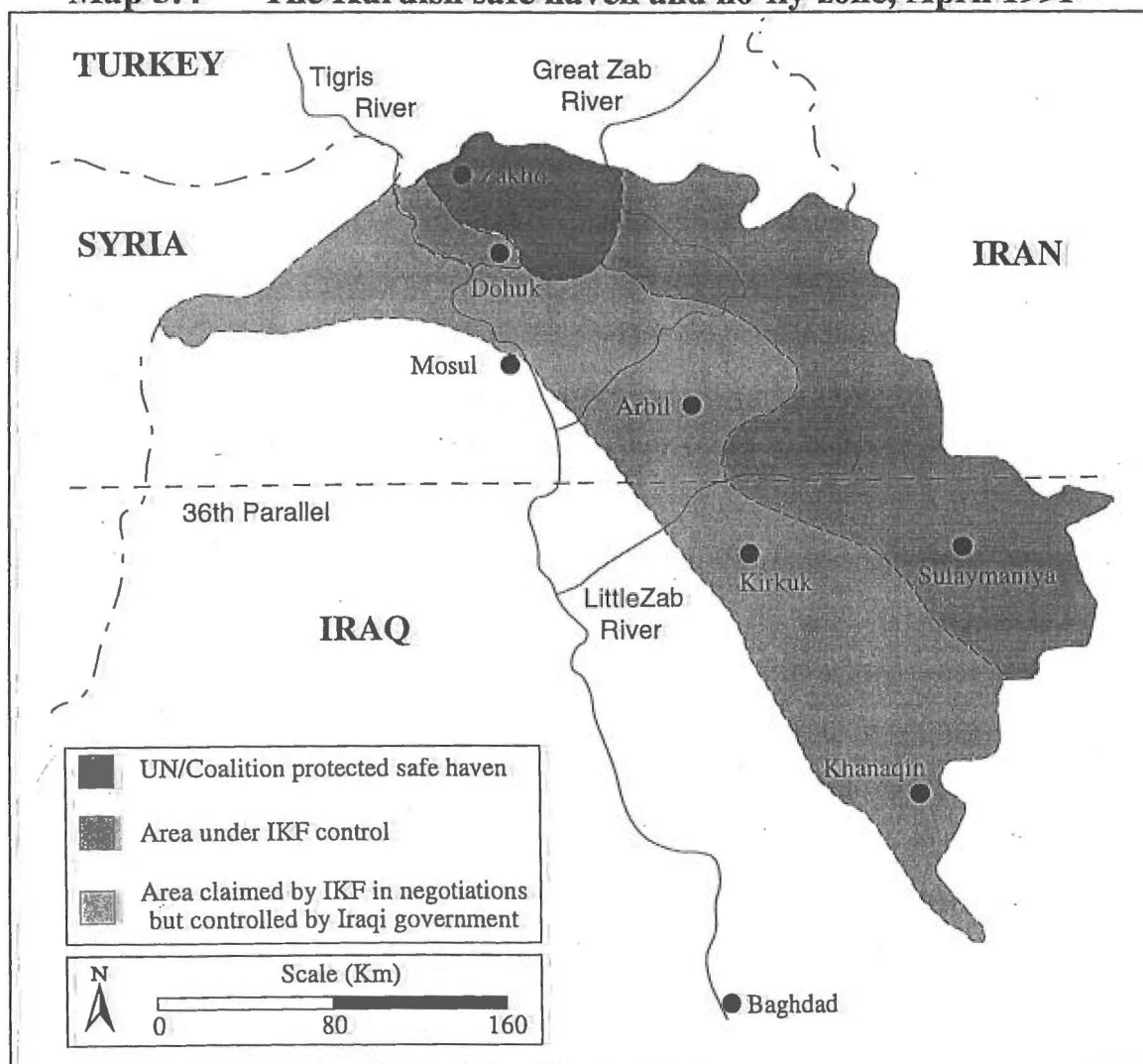
With the crisis deepening as a result of hundreds of thousands of Kurds pouring across the borders into Iran and Turkey, the Western public became the unlikely champions of the Kurdish cause (at least temporarily) and demanded their governments provide military protection and humanitarian relief to the Kurds. (*The Economist* 13 and 20 April 1991). This internal pressure was matched by pleas from Tehran and Ankara for international assistance in providing for, respectively, 1.5 million and 500 000 Kurdish refugees in western Iran and southeastern Turkey (Map 5:3).

On 5 April the UN Security Council passed Resolution 688, which condemned Iraqi repression of the Kurds, demanded the cessation of such actions, and called for Baghdad to allow humanitarian relief agencies into northern Iraq. The Resolution was important for a number of reasons. First, "it was the first to mention the Kurds by name, thus lifting their status 'internationally'". Second, "it was also the first time the United Nations had insisted on the right of interference in the internal affairs of a member state" (McDowall 1996:375). Third, and in terms of this thesis, Resolution 688 includes clear evidence of a somewhat-more-than-implicit but not-quite-explicit recognition of the divergence between nation and state, and also of the interrelationship between local and global scale politics. That the conflict between the Kurds and Baghdad, through its resulting refugee crisis, resulted in a UN Security Council Resolution emphatically demonstrates that this was more than just a 'civil war'.

In practical terms Resolution 688's real importance came in its provision of the legal basis for humanitarian intervention to assist the Kurds. With the principle of non-intervention thus circumvented (at least temporarily and on a small scale), the US, Britain, France, and Holland responded to public criticism and launched Operation

Provide Comfort¹⁵. This exercise used coalition ground forces to establish a 'safe haven' in northern Iraq, where non-permanent refugee camps would be built and urgently needed shelter, food, and medicine would be provided to the Kurds. The location of the Kurdish safe haven (Map 5:4) reflected the coalition's desire to entice the refugees in Turkey back into Iraq, which Ankara had demanded so as to reduce the likelihood of the new immigrants inciting rebellion amongst Turkey's own restless Kurds. Successful US demands that all Iraqi forces be withdrawn south of the 36th Parallel and the imposition of a 'no-fly-zone' north of that line ensured the protection of not only the enclave but a substantial proportion of Kurdistan in Iraq (Map 5:4). International non-governmental humanitarian organisations, coordinated by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), operated underneath and behind the coalition's cover.

Map 5:4 The Kurdish safe haven and no-fly-zone, April 1991 -



Source: McDowall 1991:43.

¹⁵ 'Operation Provide Comfort' was the British name for the mission, while the United States insisted on calling it 'Operation Poised Hammer'.

Operation Provide Comfort, belying the coalition's reluctance to become involved, proved a major success. After the IKF and Baghdad announced a ceasefire on 11 April, and the Iraqi government acquiesced to all UN and coalition demands a week later, Kurdish refugees in Iran and Turkey returned in droves to Iraq and the security of the safe haven and no-fly-zone. During short stays in coalition-run refugee camps within the safe haven, the refugees received food and medicine. Confident in the coalition ground and air presence, many Kurds then returned to whatever remained of their homes. As the civilians returned so too did the political leadership and the *peshmerga* who, with the Iraq army confined below the 36th Parallel, were able to reassert their control over the northern part of Kurdistan in Iraq (Map 5:4). But the rebellion, the retribution, and the refugee crisis had cost the Kurds dearly, and once again they could point to the geopolitical vagaries of global powers as at least partly responsible for their plight.

Forward to peace or back to war?

With Iraq's army effectively neutralised by coalition troops protecting the safe haven and Allied aircraft enforcing the no-fly-zone, the IKF was confident that a substantial and lasting autonomy agreement could be formulated with Baghdad. Thus within weeks of the Republican Guard chasing two million Kurds out of Kurdistan in Iraq, the Kurdish leadership was back at the negotiating table with Saddam Hussein, attempting to agree upon a new Kurdish Autonomy Region.

By June 1991, however, "it was clear that the negotiations were grinding to a halt". The deterioration of the talks had as much to do with Kurdish infighting as "Saddam's foot-dragging style of negotiation" (McDowall 1996:377). The KDP - PUK rivalry once again surfaced, causing a serious split in the IKF. The major reason for the renewed tensions was that Jalal Talabani had indicated that if these negotiations failed the PUK was ready to resume their guerilla war. On the other hand Massoud Barzani was against a return to war given the KDP's, and the Kurds' in general, losses of more than a decade of almost continuous war. Without a common negotiating position the IKF, and the talks with Baghdad, were in serious jeopardy.

As negotiations began to stall Saddam Hussein contributed further to their eventual cancellation in August, by gradually imposing an economic blockade on the

Kurds through the establishment of a “fortified containing line across northern Iraq along the 36th Parallel” (O’Ballance 1996:195). Vital food and fuel supplies were cut off, and again the Kurds began to suffer miserably, as they were effectively subjected to a double embargo with international economic sanctions still in force against Iraq. The blockade was only penetrated by small amounts of humanitarian relief brought in from Iran and Turkey. These supplies, however, were woefully inadequate and became extortionately expensive commodities on the black market. The KDP, in particular and much to the chagrin of the PUK, gained considerable income through its control of the only practical road border crossing from Turkey into Kurdistan in Iraq, where it was able to charge ‘import duties’ and acquire significant quantities of the goods.

Despite the crippling economic sanctions, the breakdown of autonomy negotiations, the growing KDP - PUK tension, and the withdrawal of the last coalition ground troops from the ‘safe haven’, control of which was handed over to the UNHCR and other international non-governmental humanitarian organisations, the Kurds remained optimistic about the creation of a Kurdish Autonomous Region. The greatest single source of this positive outlook was the holding of a Kurdish ‘general election’ on 19 May 1992, which established in Arbil an unprecedented Kurdish National Assembly of 105 seats. The KDP and PUK had 50 seats each, while the remaining five were shared between two minority parties¹⁶. The election of a Kurdish President was similarly declared a dead heat, and Barzani (48%) and Talabani (45%) were appointed as joint heads of the IKF. Although the election was undoubtedly an “historic moment” (McDowall 1996:381), both of these results reflected the Kurds’ division between the KDP and PUK camps. To some extent this rivalry was diluted by the non-involvement of Barzani and Talabani in the Kurdish parliament, but their personal competition continued nonetheless.

In October 1992 fighting between PUK *peshmerga* and Iraqi forces broke out around Sulaymaniya just south of the 36th Parallel. By November this confrontation had spread to Arbil, and up to 200 000 Kurds were once more in flight towards the Iranian border (McDowall 1996:378). These battles proved costly to Baghdad, who also feared that a continued ground operation north of the 36th Parallel, as Arbil is, would soon bring

¹⁶ The Assyrian Democratic Movement gained four seats, while a KDP surrogate, the Kurdistan Christian Unity Party, gained one seat.

a coalition response, and decided to withdraw from the fighting. Saddam Hussein, however, maintained the economic pressure, which achieved its objective of undermining the popularity of the Kurds' new government. Barzani himself was forced to admit that the IKF's "governing process is paralysed....There is a crisis in the Kurdistan Front" (Quoted in McDowall 1996:379).

As the harsh economic and difficult political conditions continued throughout 1993 tensions between the KDP and the PUK began to increase. The tightrope snapped in May 1994, and the two parties descended into open conflict around the city of Rowanduz. McDowall (1996:386) estimates that over 1 000 *peshmerga* were killed, 70 000 civilians fled their homes, and both the KDP and the PUK were guilty of executing prisoners. Although fighting between these two groups was not a new phenomenon, the entry into the conflict of a new Kurdish organisation, the Islamic Movement of Kurdistan (IMK), certainly was. The IMK was led by one Mulla Uthman Abdul Aziz, previously a pro-Government *jash* commander but who had stood in the 1992 Presidential elections and gained a credible (given his background) four percent of the vote. The IMK was based around Mulla Uthman's home city of Halabja, which was hitherto PUK territory, thus bringing these two groups into opposition. Indeed, the KDP and IMK cooperated in the fight against their mutual foe. This battle had died down by August, but flared again in December, "leaving 500 dead, thousands of civilians displaced from many towns, Arbil in the hands of the PUK, and the administration paralysed" (McDowall 1996:387).

This situation persisted throughout 1995 and well into this year. The cover provided by the coalition patrolled no-fly-zone has afforded the Kurds, despite occasional clashes, their greatest protection from the Iraqi army. This security, however, has been undermined by the Kurds' own internal animosities, especially between the Kurdish Democratic Party and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan. Moreover, the 'double embargo' enforced on Kurdistan in Iraq has exacerbated these tensions and caused great suffering to the general population. But as the previous and the present chapter has shown, the Kurds are an optimistic and resilient people, and if they can overcome their political differences - a big ask, I concede - and the coalition maintains the no-fly-zone, their dream of a Kurdish Autonomy Region in Kurdistan in Iraq may, finally, become a reality. The immediate future of the Kurds in Iraq, therefore, is not only in their own hands but also in those of the coalition governments and, perhaps, even the United

Nations, for so long as Iraq is treated as a 'rogue state' the Kurds will play a vital role in the geopolitics of the Middle East in the post-Cold War world. Given the long history of foreign powers using the Kurds for their own geopolitical purposes, the safe haven and no-fly-zone should in no way be regarded, especially by the Kurds, as permanent - even in the short term - features of the Middle Eastern geopolitical landscape.

What has, unfortunately, remained constant in the post-Cold War world, however, is the exploitation of the Kurds by foreign governments for their own much broader geopolitical purposes. And again this in itself is an implicit, although now more explicit, recognition of the Kurds as a nation capable of acting as an internal counter against disliked and unwanted regimes. Once again this demands the separation of nation from state and an expansion of the state centric approach of 'international' relations. Moreover, the use of the Kurds as a local proxy to the global conflict equally emphatically illustrates the need for a relaxation of conflict research's division between 'international' conflict and 'civil war'.

Conclusion

This chapter has seriously undermined 'international' relations' separation of its field of study from the 'domestic politics' of states. For the Kurds, despite their statelessness, have played a consistent and prominent role in the geopolitics of colonialism, Cold War, and especially in the 'rogue state' doctrine as it has been applied to Iraq since the end of the Cold War. In turn, the presence of the Kurds, maybe not as a dominant actor but an actor nevertheless, on the world stage clearly illustrates that nations, even when they are not states, can be involved in 'international' relations. Both of these points reinforce the need to reconceptualise 'international' relations, and 'international' conflict in particular, in a non-state centric manner that allows better, more fluid consideration of local and regional scale geopolitics. That the Kurdish conflict can be analysed at the *global* scale, and over the great majority of the twentieth century, is a substantial contradiction of state centric 'international' relations. A critical geopolitics indeed.

Chapter Six

Conclusion

Nation(alism) and *international* conflict

“(When the United Nations Charter was formulated) threats to peace were expected to sweep across state borders, not erupt within them....The nation-state was supposed to be the basic unit of international politics. Yet since the end of the Cold War, the pent-up hatred and frustration of nationalist hatreds have exploded, splitting the nation-state atom and sending shock waves across the international system”.

Peter Fromuth in *The making of a security community: The United Nations after the Cold War* (1993:344)

The Kurdish case study could conveniently end here, with a synthesis of the 'current situation' of the main Kurdish parties in Iran, Iraq, and Turkey. That is, Chapter Four illustrated that the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) continues, as it has done since 1984, its terrorist-style campaign against the Turkish government. In response Ankara persists with its military suppression of the Kurdish guerillas and population. This Middle Eastern scale chapter also pointed to the Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran's (KDPI) weakness after its costly involvement in the Persian Gulf War and the assassination of its strong and charismatic Secretary-General, Abdul Rahman Ghassemlou, in 1989. The global scale framework of Chapter Five enabled a better understanding of the contemporary status of the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) in Iraq than had this scenario been evaluated at the Middle Eastern scale. For the present state of affairs in Iraq is a direct result of global geopolitical events, namely the Gulf War, the Kurdish rebellion, Baghdad's counterattack, and the refugee crisis. The creation of the safe haven and no-fly-zone has established a fragile, coalition monitored separation of Kurdish and Arab forces, but it has also seen a double economic embargo placed on Kurdistan in Iraq and inter - Kurdish fighting, especially between the KDP and PUK.

But one must always be extremely wary when dealing with case studies of political instability, for events tend to unfold quickly, dramatically, and often unpredictably. Such caution is even more essential when dealing with the Middle East: A part of the world which is more volatile, spontaneous, sensational, and erratic than most. And this has proved to be the case here, with major developments in the Kurdish situation in Iraq over the past two months¹. These recent events are of the utmost importance, not only for the Kurds and their future but also for this thesis, and are described and analysed here. These eventualities are also of extraordinary value because they simultaneously provide a more than useful temporal, empirical, and theoretical means of concluding this thesis.

¹ The time of writing is late October 1996.

Another Kurdish crisis in Iraq, August - October 1996

The latest developments in the Kurdish situation in Iraq were triggered in May of this year when the KDP and the PUK once again confronted each other militarily. The major issue of contention appears to have been which of the two parties controlled the *de facto* Kurdish enclave, remembering that the Kurdish National Assembly (KNA) was ineffective in asserting joint KDP - PUK authority. A second important sticking point, at least for the PUK, is the KDP's control of the vital supply routes into Kurdistan in Iraq from Turkey, which provides the KDP not only with income but also the power of distributing scarce resources. Given that the PUK's territorial stronghold is southern Kurdistan, and thus well removed from these entry points, few resources were reaching that far into Iraq. Initially the fighting was spasmodic and small scale, but gradually increased in intensity throughout the summer.

This renewed KDP - PUK fighting is not in itself a 'new' development, merely a recurrence of a longstanding animosity between the two parties. This antagonism dates back to the PUK's split from the KDP in 1975, was evident during the Persian Gulf War, and was given new expression, as we saw in Chapter Five, following the 1991 Gulf War and its aftermath. By August, however, the open conflict was quickly becoming much more than just inter - party fighting, and was transforming into another Kurdish crisis in Iraq.

KDP leader Massoud Barzani played a key role in the evolution, and escalation, of this conflict. In mid-August he accused the PUK of operating with Iranian military support, which both Jalal Talabani and Tehran denied. It does appear, however, that Iranian forces entered northern Iraq on the at least plausible argument of 'hot pursuit' of KDPI guerillas returning from cross-border attacks in Iran. It is a fine line between such chases and 'inadvertently' attacking KDP forces. Whatever the legitimacy of Barzani's accusation it was, in fact, quite ironic that he should lambast Talabani for accepting such support, for it will be remembered that the KDP enjoyed substantial financial and military support from Tehran, both during the Shah's reign (1961 - 75) and under Ayatollah Khomeini throughout the Persian Gulf War (1980 - 88).

Even more ironic than this criticism, however, was Barzani's appeal, in late August, to Saddam Hussein himself for military assistance in defeating the perceived

PUK - Iran coalition. Within days Iraqi ground forces crossed the 36th Parallel and gathered to the south of the *de facto* Kurdish capital of Arbil, then held by the PUK and home to the essentially defunct KNA. Despite warnings from Washington, London, and Paris, who had been alerted to Iraqi troop movements by satellite photographs, Saddam Hussein employed his forces in a joint operation with the KDP against the PUK in Arbil. After only a brief fight the city was captured on 31 August. This KDP - Baghdad cooperation was most certainly a new development in the recent history of Kurdish politics, although by no means is it unprecedented, recalling for example the KDP - Baghdad alliance after the 1958 Revolution against nominally pro-monarchy Kurdish groups.

Even though the attack lasted only a few hours and ceased as soon as Arbil was taken, the operation was a major boost for Saddam Hussein. For example, the Iraqi President announced his return to Kurdistan in Iraq and that Baghdad still possessed, or rather had rebuilt, the military capabilities to influence, if not determine, the medium to long term future of the Kurds in Iraq. In doing so Saddam also signalled to Tehran and Ankara that northern Iraq was still within his reach, so to deter continued raids into Kurdistan in Iraq by both Iranian and Turkish forces. Despite the no-fly-zone Saddam Hussein was back.

The United States, however, was not amused. Iraq was once again portrayed by Washington as a 'rogue state', even though it was acting entirely within its borders. President Clinton claimed that Saddam Hussein's aggression was "not an action he could take without paying a price" (Quoted in McGeary 1996a:27). In the first week of September Washington exacted that price by launching 44 cruise missiles in two air strikes against military installations in southern Iraq. The no-fly-zone over southern Iraq was extended northward from the 32nd to the 33rd Parallel. After some dithering Baghdad eventually withdrew its troops from north of the 36th Parallel, obviously fearing Washington's threats of "disproportionate retaliation" (Krauthammer 1996:40).

Despite the US air strikes, which rather confusingly struck targets in *southern* Iraq, Saddam Hussein's venture beyond the 36th Parallel was "an impressive success" (Krauthammer 1996:40) in the ongoing contest with Washington. For the northward advance not only saw the collapse of the safe haven (CNN News 11 September 1996),

but also wiped out a clandestine CIA operation in Kurdistan in Iraq. Fedarko (1996:19) explains that

“For five years, the CIA has been running a modest mission to bind diverse factions of Kurdish and Iraqi (Arab) dissidents into an opposition against Saddam Hussein. With Baghdad’s re-entry into northern Iraq, that mission was obliterated”.

Even the CIA director, John Deutch, was forced to concede that Saddam Hussein “had emerged from the latest confrontation ‘politically stronger’” (*The Guardian* 29 September 1996:10). Another US official asserted that “Our entire covert action programme has gone to hell” (Quoted in Fedarko 1996:20).

The withdrawal of both the US presence, which had helped to keep the Kurdish factions apart, and the Iraqi incursion meant that by October the KDP and PUK were once again able to engage in open fighting. In the eyes of the general population the KDP had lost considerable credibility in inviting Saddam Hussein back in. The PUK was able to recapture towns and territory lost through Baghdad’s intervention. By mid - October the PUK had returned to the outskirts of Arbil. Barzani has once again threatened to call upon Saddam Hussein for assistance, while the PUK has once again operated with Iranian support (*The Christchurch Press* 26 October 1996:14). The US, fearful of renewed Baghdad intervention and, even worse, a possible escalation involving large scale Iranian action, has launched a peace mission, headed by Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs Robert Pelletreau, to resolve the KDP - PUK conflict. At the time of writing Pelletreau has successfully negotiated a ceasefire, which came into force on 24 October. This cessation of hostilities has enabled Pelletreau to set up a meeting between Barzani and Talabani, with the US envoy as mediator, to be held in Turkey in the first week in November (*The Christchurch Press* 26 October 1996:14).

So what do these latest events mean for the immediate future of the Kurds? I would make two points in answer to this highly important question. First, I believe that while the KDP and PUK should welcome and enthusiastically support US mediation efforts - for these are undoubtedly in both parties’ interests - this should be tempered by caution with regard to Washington’s motives outside this role. Chapter Five demonstrated that throughout the periods of colonialism, Cold War, and the present ‘rogue state’ doctrine the Kurds have been consistently exploited by foreign and

particularly Western governments for their own much broader geopolitical purposes. The covert CIA mission in Kurdistan in Iraq, although now disbanded (though probably only temporarily), serves to illustrate the likely continuance of such policies towards the Kurds. For that operation was clearly aimed not at establishing an organised, effective, autonomous Kurdish enclave but at destabilising the Ba'ath regime and deposing Saddam Hussein (Fedarko 1996:18 - 20). On this count the Kurds should be doubly wary, for the US knows that "the splintering of a Saddam-less Iraq would leave Iran as the dominant Gulf power, an unpalatable solution (to Washington)" (Ogden 1996:21). For this reason Saddam Hussein still, ironically, fulfils a useful geopolitical role for the US by acting, as during the Persian Gulf War, as a bulwark against Iran. This double edged policy of limiting Baghdad's external military capabilities but leaving Saddam strong enough to counter Tehran has become known as "dual containment" (*The Guardian* 29 September 1996:10; McGeary 1996a:27).

Moreover, the Kurds should be extra cautious re Washington's real motives for its air strikes: The magnitude of the US retaliation appeared to be a consequence of the new crisis' timing, coinciding as it did with the height of the US Presidential election campaign. Firing a few missiles at Washington's favourite easy-target rogue state was a convenient and ideal means of for President Clinton to boost his re-election campaign, as his first-term Administration has often been criticised as lacking leadership, initiative, and strength on foreign policy issues. For the Kurds to perceive US military action as a safeguard against Baghdad aggression beyond election day, therefore, may prove to be a serious mistake.

But the Kurds are caught between a rock and a hard place, for they correctly recognise that any kind of autonomy agreement with Baghdad - if and when they can overcome their own disagreements - will depend greatly on US guarantees. Given that it is likely that the US are using the Kurds as an internal counter against Saddam, Washington may, despite its current efforts, be reluctant to see a negotiated peace between the KDP/PUK and Baghdad come to fruition. That may sound overly cynical, but again history is instructive: Although supportive of the KDP against the Ba'athists in the 1970s and, as well as the PUK, against Saddam in 1991, it was ultimately proved in both instances that Washington did not want the Kurds to prevail. Barzani has indicated that at least he is aware of these dangers, suggesting that the KDP is "still willing to

cooperate with America if it is really serious" (Quoted in Wilde 1996:27). I personally doubt that Washington is "really serious", at least not in the way Barzani is probably thinking.

The possibility of an autonomy agreement for the Kurds in Iraq leads to my second point regarding the recent events and the Kurds' immediate future. And this is to suggest that the prospects for a Kurdish Autonomous Region in Iraq do, in fact, appear favourable. These are likely to increase the longer coalition governments continue patrolling the no-fly-zone and keep Saddam at arms length, even if the elbow bends occasionally, for this will allow more time for the KDP and PUK to reconcile their differences and, hopefully, come to some kind of *modus vivendi*. One must concede, however, that there are a number of obstacles along the autonomy road, apart from the KDP - PUK rivalry and Saddam Hussein. For example, the Kurds are still suffering miserably from the effects of more than five years of double economic embargo. As long as these dual sanctions continue, so too will the PUK remain embittered at the KDP's control of the meagre resources that do make it into Kurdistan in Iraq.

Nevertheless, the possibility of a KAR being established in Kurdistan in Iraq is good, certainly much better than the chances in Iran or Turkey. But this, in turn, presents its own problems for the Kurds. For if those in Iraq achieve some type of autonomy agreement, then this will undoubtedly inspire Kurds in Iran and Turkey into even more vociferous calls for their self-determination, for their own autonomous regions. The prospect of three contiguous KAR's would, of course, inevitably lead to Kurdish calls for each to secede and join in a unified, independent state of Kurdistan. As the first step in this direction the spectre of Kurdish autonomy in Iraq is strongly resisted by both Tehran and Ankara, who in all probability would begin a new crackdown on their own dissident Kurdish groups, especially the PKK and KDPI.

There is much at stake, therefore, in the November negotiations between the KDP and the PUK. The Kurds and their sympathisers must hope that Barzani and Talabani can put their own differences aside in the interest of the far greater cause of the Kurds in all three states, and not sacrifice another opportunity for some form of self-determination at the alter of political egos. As Barzani himself has recently declared: "Hopelessness is a kind of death. We must always have hope, to the very last minute of

our lives, that things will work out for the Kurds” (Quoted in Wilde 1996:27). That working out begins next week.

A second important question needs to be asked and answered in relation to these recent events: What do they mean in the context of this thesis? Several pertinent comments are insightful in this regard. During the course of this research it has been suggested, by a number of colleagues on more than one occasion, that Kurdish rivalries and infighting do not merely detract from the idea of a single, unified Kurdish nation but actually necessitates the rejection of the Kurds as such an individual political community. I have thought long and hard about this problem, and have come up with the following response. I accept that Kurdish factionalism does indeed make the concept of Kurdish nation(alism) problematic, but I do not believe that it demands the outright dismissal of the proposition. On the contrary, I think their divisiveness and antagonisms actually *contributes* to making Kurdish nation(alism) distinctive and unique. I make this assertion for three reasons. First, the current inter-party rivalries can be seen as a throwback to the tribal area, for as illustrated in Chapter Four internal divisions and conflict have *characterised* Kurdish political history for centuries. Second, it must be emphasised that Kurdish divisions are not entirely of their own making: They are just as much a result of the Kurds’ partition into so many states and the decades, even centuries, old divide and rule policies of Tehran, Baghdad, and Ankara. Given the highly militarised situation in and around Kurdistan, it is hardly surprising that inter-Kurdish hostilities often and easily descend into armed warfare. Third, and perhaps most simply yet powerfully, it is crucial to remember that Kurdish inter-party conflict is *not* about their existence or otherwise as a nation. Rather, the conflict is over what that nation(alism) means and how to best fulfil it in terms of national self-determination. The KDP, for example, argues for autonomy within a federal Iraq, while the PUK maintains a policy of outright secession and independent statehood. On these grounds, therefore, I do not perceive the recent (and current) intra-Kurdish fighting as in any way de-legitimising their claim to nationhood; it may complicate Kurdish nation(alism) and hinder progress to self-determination, but in no way does it undermine their nation status.

But in terms of this thesis undoubtedly the most telling facet of the recent drama was the consistent referral in the media to the fighting between the KDP and the PUK as a ‘civil war’. Even former US Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger referred to

Baghdad's intervention as "supporting one side in a civil war between two Kurdish factions" (CNN News 5 September 1996). This description is a crucial point of immeasurable importance, for if Kurd against Kurd constitutes a 'civil war' then what, pray tell, is Kurd against Arab? Or, for that matter, Kurd against Persian and Kurd against Turk? Under conflict research's state-centric categorisation, both situations would be classed as 'civil war'. But to suggest that these two fundamentally different conflicts are of the same genre stretches credulity beyond breaking point. On the other hand, under conflict research's interpretation Kurd against Persian/Arab/Turk is not an 'international' conflict because, as we know, the Kurds do not live in their own 'nation-state'. This dilemma simply yet effectively demonstrates the need, no, *demand*, for a reconceptualisation of what is 'civil war' and what is 'international' conflict. I believe that my argument for consideration of an inter-nation-al conflict both overcomes this categorisation problem and is indeed vindicated by the reference to intra-Kurdish conflict as 'civil war'.

A third vital point emerged from the recent events: The extraordinarily quick, almost instantaneous, escalation of events from the local (the KDP - PUK conflict), to the Middle Eastern (Baghdad's intervention), to the global (US air strikes) scale; and back to the Middle Eastern (Baghdad's withdrawal), and down again to the local (renewed KDP - PUK fighting) scale. This rapid transition once again demonstrates that local, Middle Eastern, and global geopolitics are highly dependent upon each other, and in both directions. To use the 'nation-state' as a "container" (Taylor 1994) as international relations and conflict research do, therefore, is to draw an arbitrary division along this local - Middle Eastern - global continuum. For how are we to understand Middle Eastern geopolitics, for example, if local geopolitics are excluded from analysis? Clearly, this categorisation is absurd and there is obviously a need, no, *demand*, to move "beyond containers" (Taylor 1995), to go past the 'nation-state' and reconceptualise and remap both international relations in general and international conflict in particular.

Nation(alism) and international conflict

This thesis has been an attempt to write just such a 'critical geopolitics' of, specifically, 'international' conflict. The need for making such a critique arose from conflict research's division between 'civil war' and 'international' conflict in simple

accordance with nation-state boundaries, which reflected its state-centric geopolitical discourse. As demonstrated in Chapter One, however, the nation-state was shown, because of its empirical infrequency, to be an inappropriate unit of analysis. Rather, I proposed the concept of nation, regardless of whether they were states or not, as a more appropriate means of mapping global political space because it is the nation, as a distinct, separate, and unique political community, that is the ultimate focus of individual and collective loyalty. I then argued that such a cartography would enable a nation-centric, rather than the conventional state-centric, conceptualisation of conflict between *nations*, as inter-nation-al conflict, with the belief that such an approach would better take account of, and indeed explain, local political geographies. Thus general argument was fleshed out during the course of this thesis.

Chapter Two began by undertaking an extensive literature review on the contemporary conceptualisation of nation and nationalism. Such an understanding was essential given that I was attempting to undo the traditional conflation of nation and state in international relations/conflict research. The nation was indeed shown to be a distinct, separate, and unique political community, formed around ties of territory and resources, ethnicity and culture, and historical geography, that is created by and perpetuates the political doctrine of nationalism which seeks fulfilment of the nation through the achievement of national self-determination. It is nationalism, therefore, that is both the impetus behind and the result of nation-formation, hence the idea of nation(alism). The political doctrine of nationalism is also what links the nation to the state. Two distinct types of nation(alism), those with states, or official nation(alism), and those without states, or ethnic nation(alism), were identified and explained. It was also outlined how conflict between nations, whether ethnic or official, is a likely occurrence in a world in which all territory comes under the jurisdiction of one or another state. This non-state centric approach enabled a reconceptualised, nation-centric inter-nation-al conflict to be proposed. Chapter Two concluded by linking this review of nation(alism) studies to the Kurdish case study which followed.

Chapter Three began the overtly empirical argument by providing a local scale regional geography of Kurdistan. This discussion introduced the place, which illustrated the territory and resources of the Kurdish nation, the people, which examined the ethnicity and culture of the Kurds, and the partition of the Kurds and Kurdistan, the

single most important dimension of the Kurdish nation's historical geography. Collectively these three sections demonstrated the spatial divergence between nation and state and the sociocultural differences between the Kurdish ethnic nation and the Persian, Arab, and Turkish official nations. The chapter concluded by identifying three sources of conflict between the Kurds and Persians, Arabs, and Turks.

Chapter Four increased the scale of analysis to the Middle East, and traced the evolution of Kurdish nation(alism) from its early beginnings in the nineteenth century to the mass phenomenon of the past two generations. This charting was achieved by examining the development of the actual conflict between Kurds and Persians/Arabs/Turks, from the small scale tribal rebellions of *amirs*, *aghas*, and *shaykhs* to the large scale multi-party rebellions of modern political leaders. This discussion emphatically demonstrated the diametrical opposition of nation and state, and therefore the validity of conceptualising conflict between nations, again regardless of whether they are ethnic or official nations, as inter-nation-al conflict, for this is significantly more than just a 'civil war'.

Chapter Five analysed the role of Kurdish nation(alism) at the global scale. I argued that the Kurds have consistently been recognised by governments foreign to the Middle East as a distinct political community and as such have exploited them during the periods of colonialism, Cold War, and the present rogue state doctrine, for their own much broader geopolitical purposes. This recognition and exploitation is an implicit acknowledgment of the critical difference between nation and state. Chapter Five also illustrated the links between global, Middle Eastern, and local geopolitics.

In conclusion, then, this thesis has argued conflict research's state-centric approach to examining 'international' conflict is too rigid and restrictive an epistemology because *nations*, even when they are not states, can be involved in conflicts that are much more than mere 'civil wars', in character and in importance. This thesis has demonstrated one such example of an *international* conflict. The question now, perhaps, is to identify just how many other Kurdistan's are there are, so as to force a much needed revision of conflict research's approach to this crucial aspect of international relations.

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